SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

# PC PLAYSTATION XBOX

# Dragon Age II

#### **COME ON NOW...**

You do know that the whole idea of 'dragons' really comes from primitive people accidentally happening across exposed dinosaur bones, right?

### **Previewed**

- Epic Mickey
- LittleBigPlanet 2
- DmC Devil May Cry
- BioShock Infinite

# Hardware

- Gaming Rig Buyer's Guide
- > Ultimate Gift Guide for Gamers



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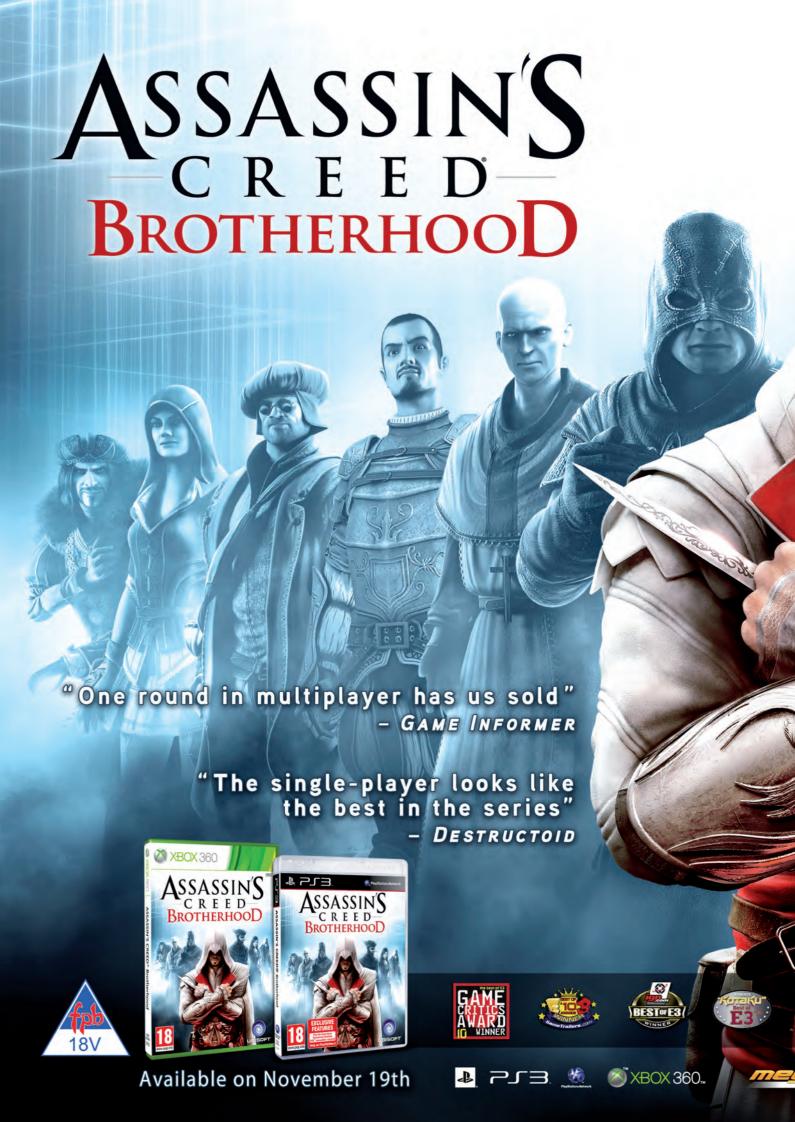
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- Call of Duty: Black Ops <
  - Medal of Honor ≤
- Star Wars: < The Force Unleashed II
  - Castlevania: **<** The Lords of Shadow
    - F1 2010 <
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DDR3 **DRAM Type** 

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() PALIT

\* Process Technology: 40nm

\* Processor Cores: 192 cores

\* Memory Amount: 1024MB

\* Memory Interface : 128bit

\* DRAM Type : GDDR5

\* Graphics Clock: 930MHz

\* Memory Clock: 2000MHz

\* Processor Clock: 1860 MHz

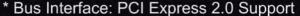
\* Memory Bandwidth: 64 (GB/Sec)

\* Power Consumption: 107W





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\* NVIDIA CUDA Technology

\* NVIDIA SLI Ready

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- \* MTBF:100,000Hrs at 25°C



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- \* Complies with Energy Star-V standards
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We gave Geoff some cheap leather armour, a potential love interest (named Mikhaila Jameson) and a set of vicious moral choices before unleashing him on the world to see if he could survive life as an RPG character. He couldn't.

#### NAG'S ULTIMUMIT HOLODAY GIFT GIDE 4 GAMERZ

Can't decide what to buy your videogame-loving loved ones this Christmas? Then check out our super-awesome gift guide.

#### Gaming Rig Buyer's Guide

Struggling to get those frags because your system lags behind your 1337 skillz? We've put together a selection of badass gaming rigs to suit your budget.

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So... Festive season theme required here\*, struggling for a good opening, umm, oh – hang on. I've got it...

I'll tell you why gamers are the happiest demographic in the world – we get to experience that child-like holiday excitement/spirit/whatever every 2-3 months. Or, if your religious beliefs don't include a bearded fat man in a red suit - it's just like having a birthday every few months. Now for those at the back, daydreaming while I'm writing, being a gamer is great because you get rewarded often. Rewarded is really the wrong word, so let's rather go with experience the thrill of opening an exciting present more often than most other people.

This present is of course any new game, it also differs from a traditional present because it's not wrapped and you know exactly what you're getting every time – in fact you've probably been looking at it and reading about it for months (decades in some extreme cases – yes you Duke Nukem) before you get it. Regardless, all this prior present knowledge doesn't erase the familiar fuzzy, warm feeling and eager breathless anticipation of opening an unknown present. With a game there is still the thrill of tearing open the plastic and cracking that DVD case – all the more if you've ordered the special edition whatnot that comes with a remote controlled car, a figurine, a comic book, a soundtrack, a badge, a button and a cool other thing. The great part about being a gamer is this special thrill of opening and installing a new game – sure by 'New Year's Day' you won't be playing with it as much anymore but sometimes, just sometimes you get one that you'll play for months on end. Who else do you know gets to have this great feeling every other month.

# 24 DAYS OF GIVING (WELL, RECEIVING REALLY)

From 1 December 2010 if you go down to the woods today (www.nag. co.za) you will see a new competition. Every day until 24 December there is something different to win (from games to hardware) on the NAG website. It's an SMS competition and it's pretty crazy. So check it out. Is that okay marketing people - can I go now?

Well it's been a stunning year but now you must go and enjoy the holiday season and I really do hope that every one of you gets exactly what you deserve.;)

#### Michael James

\* Yes I know – I should be calling it the holiday season. I'll try my best to remain politically correct during this Ed's Note and for the rest of the magazine for that matter. I'm disclaiming any liability or legal action by disclosing that I'm aware that we have a wide range of people reading this magazine that come from very different backgrounds, sexual preferences and beliefs (yes, I love all - you bought this magazine didn't you). The reality of it and the reason behind disclaimers and political correctness – to the terrified corporate world your money is good everywhere. So forgive me if this magazine comes across as a 'Christmas' issue – it's just that time of the year when some people buy gifts for people they don't know or like because that's what they've been doing their whole



#### Cover story

I usually hold back a little when describing the fail we are sometimes dealt here at *NAG* when trying to secure a cover feature. It's one of those "if I didn't laugh I'd cry analogies." So this month we originally were discussing a *Guild Wars 2* cover feature they were going to create a custom NAG cover and everything for us. This didn't pan out due to various reasons and so on. They were good enough to offer us some exclusive video content to look at for the feature, but we've got a 'hands on code' rule for cover features (i.e. we must actually play the code in order to write any feature otherwise how can we expect our readers to take us seriously). So we politely said no. Next up was Epic Mickey, this was a tough call considering this is Warren Spector's new game and Miktar even went to visit the studio for this one. To Disney or not to Disney? was the question, but in the end I think Mickey Mouse on the cover is stretching the boundaries a little for us (and probably you). After some panic, to the rescue came our good friends over at Electronic Arts. They had the code, they had the art and we even got a snappy Q&A back from the game's lead designer in record time... So there you have it and a partridge in a pear tree.

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(ABD)

Black Ons smells StarCraft laid an egg...











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#### Letter of the Moment

From: Gustav Subject: Why?

HAD AN EPIPHANY AND just had to ask a question which you or possibly some of the NAG readers might be able to answer. A couple of months ago the same question was asked in the editorial, but it was more in a rhetorical fashion. This question is too important for that and begs to be answered. That question is in short, why? [Deep, Ed]

I have been playing games for a long time but only recently ventured online for the first time. I am going to base my question on Bad Company 2 PS3, because that is what I played.

In my first venture online it was mostly a very pleasant experience, especially in the beginning. As time went by though, strange things started to occur. Things like people not caring about the objective any more but rather sitting in your base shooting you as you spawn and helicopters being parked in places which was clearly a programming error but where they can shoot at

you for all time without a care in the world. Why would you sit on a high voltage line to shoot at people? You mentioned in the editorial it was to gain points, to become a great and wondrous level 50? Why? What on earth is the point?

Why are these guys chasing the points? Why do you want to be a level 50? When my friends and I play together and we see a bunch of level 50s playing, we move on to another server. So, nobody wants to play the game with you if you are a level 50? Over the last couple of weeks more and lower level guys appeared, running and gunning who obviously knew the game inside out. The only conclusion we came to is that these were high level guys playing the game over again. Why did you spend all that time cheating and irritating other people? Bragging rights? Impress your friends? Please give me a break! Please cut and edit this very long e-mail or ignore it completely but please just ask this question. Why are you chasing the points – for what? I enjoyed

the game because it was fun, I don't even know what level I am/ was. This could make a very good psychiatric paper!"

It's kind of funny that you're asking these kinds of questions because we all know that many online gamers are idiots – especially PC gamers (and yes, I'm a PC gamer). It's surprising to see this kind of thing happening on the consoles because I always thought console gamers were more civilised. The short answer here is that anyone can buy a console / PC

and play games online. Unfortunately this includes people who have no skill at playing games and must camp, cheat and use exploits in the game to gain an advantage (this includes sniping because sniping is really just elaborate camping). I won't even go into how adding ranks to these kinds of games was a terrible idea in the beginning and is still a terrible idea now. On the bright side not everyone is like that and there are more decent honest players out there than the morons you're talking about, Ed.

The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by Megarom. The winner receives a game and a hoodie for coming up with the most inspired bit of wisdom or cleverness.

#### IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!

Land Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158 Cyber mail: letters@nag.co.za Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...



From: Jaryd

Subject: The four challenges of NAG **WAS THINKING OF WHAT** to write to the guys and girls of NAG. I could write about games, but then again the whole magazine is about games. I could write about how all gamers are cool because everyone plays games, but I realised you get too many of those letters. And then it hit me, I should write about the real reason I am writing this letter. And so my story begins... My friends and I are always saying that we should enter a NAG competition but we never do. So I decided to finally enter a competition, but I didn't just enter one competition I entered them all. My first challenge was to find the Beavatar, so I grabbed my NAG and scouted everywhere for Ney'turik, but just couldn't find her so I decided to just guess a random page for this challenge because it was too difficult. My next challenge was NAG fan art. I always read that the winners use advanced applications like Blender and Photoshop and since I don't have any of these programs I had to use a simpler program. So I used Paint and made a pretty good God of War/NAG fan art. My third challenge was caption of the month and after many minutes of brain storming I finally came up with a reasonably funny caption that should at least be considered for wining. My final challenge is the letter of the moment challenge which should be done in a few minutes... And so this is what I did during most of my Sunday. Thanks for an awesome magazine and keep up the great work."

I'll bet your teachers always say that if you just applied yourself you'd do much better... You didn't get the Beavatar, your 'caption' was a miniature essay weighing in at 43 words, the artwork was really rubbish - just adding text to an existing image isn't going to cut it. But hey, at least your letter ended up here - not too bad getting 1 out of 4... However, this was really more out of pity than anything else so it's really only half out of four. Ed.

From: Ziyaad Subject: Printing of NAG

OT TO BE ANNOYING or anything I just wanted to inform you of the terrible job the printer has done of printing your magazine. Some pages are barely readable as they have been double printed. Colours are off; some pages are dark so you can't read anything, etc. Please can you do something about this because this will put off buyers from your magazine?"

Please send us your details and we'll send you a replacement magazine. It does happen on occasion that a copy of the magazine is a little off. I could say something here about breaking a few eggs when making an omelette, but that's probably not going to help. We do send these broken magazines to the printer and they do get back to us with a fairly reasonable explanation. Sorry for the irritation and we'll send you a new copy right away. Ed.

#### From: Jake

Subject: Steam! [I deleted the other 20 exclamation marks, Ed]

AM WRITING THIS LETTER to express my hatred to this useless (explicit language) thing. I buy R.U.S.E (CD) and install it to find out that it doesn't want to open then I uninstall the game and reinstall it. So I type the CD key in again and it says I can't use it because I used it the previous attempt at installing the game, and THEN I restarted my computer to try and fix the issue and find that Just Cause 2 (which I've had for the last 4 months) doesn't work because it says I have to buy it. What the (explicit language) is going on. At this very moment my head is about to blow. And last thing, great magazine.

You know what – I don't want to hear anything more about Steam this and Steam that in the magazine. All the writers here at NAG use Steam and it's probably one of the best gaming delivery platforms in the history of the world. The new rule looks like this - if you're having

### >> Shorts [extracts of LOL from NAG reader letters]

"NAG's lame attempt at humour: swapping the screenshots for FIFA 11 and PES 2011 reviews! Classic!" - Oltman

"One of my friends said that he finished Modern Warfare 2 on veteran in 20 minutes. I told him he was lying. He said that he would prove it to me when I came to him. Do you now some good games I can buy in 2011?" – Elias

"...but unfortunately you get those not so good, good for nothing sons of freaking zombie sluts who think they can fix everything with a can of Q20 and duck tape (if it moves and is not suppose to use duck tape or if it is not moving and is suppose to use Q20 = outtakes from a Fixing for dummies book).

- Tjaart

trouble with Steam and hate it, then it must be something you've done. Now send a mail to Steam and ask them for help. Ed.

From: Charles

Subject: A gaming dedication story... WELL I FIND MYSELF writing this in response to your outcry for some gaming/life related stories. Mine begins with 2 years of begging for a Spectrum 48K. Those were the days... watching a bunch of coloured lines for 5 minutes in breathless anticipation, all for a game where maybe 6 colours fought for a place on screen... oh and everything looked like it was made with Lego blocks! I have personally completed over 1,000 games in my life... from the Spectrum days through to the C64, Atari ST, NES, Mega Drive, PC, PS1, PS2 and my current 360. What is the point to all this? Well I will tell you... I was retrenched at the beginning of the year. I lost my townhouse in the hills, my fancy car and had to sell 95% of all my stuff. I am currently back at my mom's spot (chicks dig it!) in a place called Meyerton... about as much fun as staring at a baked potato. All I still have are my 360, LCD and my games (aka children!) and they keep my mind busy in these times of trouble. Games have always been there for me... and me for them..."

Keep up the faith brother... Ed

From: losh **Subject:** Errors!

**EY GUYS AT NAG,** great magazine! I was recently looking over the October (2010) issue of NAG and realised that there were a few errors, on the cover page you wrote "Duke Nukem Forever >What do you really expect us to say here? Coming 2011!!!1!" Notice the 'exclamation marks', and one BIGGER mistake on page 50, CoD - Black Ops page (I seriously can't wait for this game!!!), for RELEASE DATE you wrote: www.callofduty.com and for WEB you wrote: "November 2010", now I came to 1 reason for this, you guys at *NAG* just have such a fun time gaming and 'working' (not) all the time, you don't notice the errors that slip

#### NAG Fan artwork

This is the best of what we received during the month. If you can insert, use or create a piece of gaming artwork incorporating the NAG logo you might also end up here for your three lines of fame.



Pieter Visser: "If NAG keeps improving, then so must I. Here's my humble attempt at another NAG fan art drawing. This drawing took over 50 hours to complete, using pen, paper, Photoshop, and a graphics tablet. Hope you guys enjoy it."



This month, Phoenix Software is giving away copies of AVG Internet Security 2011 and Nero Multimedia Suite 10.

past? I will never stop reading NAG due to this fact that the magazine is simply amazing and brings me enjoyment every month! Keep up the good work!:)

The exclamation thing is supposed to be like that (it's an Internet thing) and as for the Call of Duty thing - our designers think they're overworked and underpaid. Sorry and thanks, Ed.

From: Bill

Subject: I am not amused

■■ N YOUR OCTOBER ISSUE The Force Unleashed II was advertised to be released on 26 October. I trusted NAG and went on the Wednesday the 27th a day after the advertised release and shop after shop there was no Force Unleashed to be found. Eventually a guy told me that it was only coming out on Friday the 29th. After waiting moths to buy the game we had to go home and wait another day. I have the game now and enjoying killing hundreds of storm troopers but false advertisement has caused mental and physical pain. Mental because of having to wait that day and not being able to sleep and physical because of having to walk around the shops twice with sandals that hurt my feet. You can avoid me taking you to court if you give me the letter of the moment prize."

I guess this is where I say, 'so sue me.' Ed.

#### From: David

**Subject:** (Hopefully) the most eclectic chicken scratch

AMN!, WHEN I STARTED to write this letter I was going to preach the benefits of camping/sniping, complain about how violence in games affects children and then I was going to ask for a free dream machine (in case you had one just lying around). I was originally going to do this but then I found a somewhat more interesting topic.

I was sitting in my room playing BioShock, when a thought came to me, as if sent from the gods for me to ponder, I thought I would leave said pondering for a better time and subsequently resumed my Little Sister hunting session... I sat in the bath (and, at the risk of

prune hands) began to think; Do games have souls?

Let me explain: months ago a friend taught me how to lay out an efficient desktop; 4 icons: Recycle bin, 2 favourite games at the time and a desktop folder (subdivided into games, applications, etc...)

I was haphazardly searching the games file one day, when I was suddenly filled with memories... Mass Effect 1, 2, Borderlands, Sims, all forgotten gems. What troubled my conscience the most however was the little icon for Fallout 3, my all-time favourite game. I say this because it was different from the others, more than just an impulse buy; I loved it, waited for months, saving until I had enough money to buy it, fuelled by trailers, reviews in NAG, comments from friends..

I finally bought it and it had such an effect to it, different, special. It sat for months on the desktop as my favourite, played every day.

But sadly, like all good things, the magic ended, new, shiny things came and soon, the vault dweller and I began to grow apart... I felt like a sadist when I removed it from the desktop (minus 1000 karma).

Which brings me to my point, do games have souls? Does Fallout feel depressed and unloved when BioShock and Call of Duty slide into the drive? I can't bring myself to look at its box; does it get envious of the newer things on the shelf? No, it sits there, waiting, silently hoping to be played, innocent and expectant as a small child, glaring at me with a guilt-inducing stare... watching me... I suppose what I'm trying to say is, as humans, we attach emotion to anything; earthworms, cars, rocks to little heaps of plastic and silicon. Even in light of this truth, however, when the alluring smile of the vault boy slips into my thoughts once again....

I may not be able to resist...

I've always seen it this way. Imagine all those games you never finished... You've left characters stuck in mazes, in the middle of a boss fight, hanging off a cliff, in a pit of snakes, in the dark and I could go on. I worry about those poor game characters wondering what happened and where did God go. ;) Ed.

#### On the Forums

#### QUESTION: Black Ops is almost here. Do you care?

**Echo:** No, not really. Treyarch, while a pretty OK developer, just isn't Infinity Ward.

Die Jason: Nah... Halo. I have enough shooters to play at the moment, SP and MP, and this game doesn't look like it brings anything new to the table. People will buy it because it's more of what they wait... it's COD, and there are zombies.

**Sci\_Ghost:** I've been a fan of the COD series since the 1st game. At first when I heard there would be no local servers I was disappointed but with Mweb now hosting, my faith has been restored. I just hope the game will live up to expectations.

**Hawk:** Meh, don't really care. SC2 will be the next game I buy.

**Azraphael:** Couldn't give a damn to be honest. While the games are great fun to play, the online community really irritates the living crap out of me. Also, I am slightly curious in the new Medal of Honour, quietly hoping it will be the better game.

**CaViE:** There are SO many games out soon and all you can ask about is Black Ops? Still. Kind of amped for it. You can't really go wrong with explosive crossbows.

**Wisp:** Meh... don't care because I would need a major upgrade on my Pc just to play any new games... I'll stick to Warcraft 3 thank you.

OllieTheDog: Well depends, will probably only buy it for multiplayer

Brazed: Do I care? Yes, I'd like to give it a go... but I won't be spending a dime on it. Not after the Infinity ward debacle. The Modern Warfare franchise won't be seeing another cent coming their way from me.

FreddyAintDead: Remote controlled bomb car. It's like bacon, you only say no if God tells you to.

**Hideinlight:** Since online multiplayer is out for me, there's really no reason for me to get this.

Wah: You can kill people with a remote controlled car. No sane person wouldn't care.

Miz3r: I am not so hyped up about this one personally, I think the multiplayer could be awesome with the radio controlled cars, but it's going to be a mass explosion based game with everybody using the little explosive cars and less tactics and skill being used, so might be this games downfall in the end, but I will keep an open mind for it.

**Machine:** My level of caring is subtle at best. If the multiplayer takes off, I might buy this one. I haven't bought a CoD game since CoD4 Modern Warfare. It does look very slick but I'll wait for reviews to pop up first.

cov1e\_stalker: I should care, COD 4 is getting old and Black ops does have crazy things like under-barrel flame throwers, attack doggies, customizable everything and most importantly mod tools and LAN play!

KaosLord: Dedicated servers. 'nuff said.

**McDangerous:** Contrary to most, I'm actually looking forward to the SP primarily. If they capture the epic of MW1 and 2 with more depth like WaW, coupled with zombies, it'll be a winner in my books. Call me a CoD bitch if you will.

Changsta 187: No more nukes? No one cares.

**Slither:** I MISS MIKTAR!!! WHERE IS HE? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM???

Only the brave will offer up a nut to the devil, everyone is welcome: http://www.nag.co.za/forums/

I, Gamer

by Miklós Szecsei

#### You have a new neighbour

NEARLY DID SOMETHING HORRENDOUS. Had I gone through with it, it would have been an abhorrent act against NAG, you the readers and even gaming itself. For that I ask - nay, I beg for your forgiveness.

With most things in life, once you've been doing the same activity for twenty-odd years, it's natural for you to look in alternative areas for a similar yet fresh experience. If those other areas are easily accessible and utilised by millions of people, then the prospect becomes less of a new means to scratch an itch, and more of a curiosity made increasingly alluring by it already having appealed to the masses.

Fifty-five million people can't possibly be wrong, can they? That's what I thought as I logged into Facebook and clicked the Farmville link. I was greeted by a cheerful little duck chewing

Fifty-five million people can't possibly be wrong, can they? That's what I thought as I logged into Facebook and clicked the Farmville link.

on a piece of grass. His smile implied, "Come on in! It's colourful, friendly and wonderfully bucolic in here" but I could see through his charade.

Besides, a duck that happy is clearly mallardjusted (pun LOL!) or on crack cocaine. His friend, Mr. Sheep, stared wide-eyed at the "Play Now" icon, as if willing my cursor to meander its way through the lush green grass and bright yellow flowers to happen upon the fauxwood, rustic button.

It's clear that Mr. Sheep is the victim of an abusive relationship here at the gates to Farmville. Beneath his contrived smile and doe-eyes I could see he tries desperately to warn would-be players of the dangers that lurk ahead. All the while, Mallardjusted watches him from behind, making sure that their welcoming facade does not show the faintest of cracks. But Mr. Sheep knows a true gamer when he sees one, and during all his years of servitude to Zynga and Mallardjusted, he has become the master of separating casual gamers from real gamers.

So I hesitated, and for that I am eternally grateful to Mr. Sheep's covert warnings. Clicking the "Reviews" tab only confirmed my suspicions: post upon post by desperate people all crying out for others to add them as neighbours, as if their mantras of "pls. add me" would somehow absolve their souls from this first circle of gaming hell.

Godspeed, Mr. Sheep, and thank you.





# Start 'em early

As if some universal hive-mind has sent out its orders, there are now two new poker titles available from two very large publishers.

By time you read this, Valve would have released their tonguein-cheek Poker Night at the Inventory, which features characters including Penny Arcade's Tycho, Team Fortress 2's Heavy, Strong Bad from Homestar Runner and that loveable, hyperkinetic, three-foot rabbity thing from Sam & Max. According to Valve, it's a whole lot more than simple poker, as the characters will "come together in ways some never thought possible, in a setting few would have predicted." Sounds kinky.

Next up is Microsoft and Full House Poker, which we assume is running off the non-success of episodic quiz show 1 vs 100 as a sortof spiritual sequel, from the same internal developers at Microsoft Game Studios. The game is currently entering its open beta phase, with invitations sent out to a select few. It will entail players' Avatars reportedly "bringing player personalities to the poker table with unique tells and Avatar accessories.



### Criterion to continue on its current track

The re-imagined *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit* should be available by time you read this (look for our review in the January issue), and in their typical fashion, EA is already discussing plans for the future of the series

"My vision for NFS is it will be a brand the consumer can enjoy on an annual basis, and he can look at that game and say, 'I know this is going to be a high quality entertainment experience.' That is a must for us," explained EA senior vice president Patrick Soderlund. "Now we have multiple studios building NFS products. That will mean you'll get a slightly different touch on NFS on an annual basis, but hopefully a much higher-quality experience."

Soderlund also revealed that it's safe to assume that Criterion Games will continue to work on the arcade-style Need for Speed titles. Unfortunately, this news leaves the Burnout series with an uncertain fate. "It's not dead," says Soderlund, but at the moment consider the series in limbo while Criterion gets to work at the grindstone.

#### **>>** FREEBIE ARCADE GAMING HITS

**IPHONE** We're not sure how successful Microsoft's XBLA Game Room is, but it looks like Capcom is taking a page from Microsoft's book, and then adding a few unique touches of its own. The Capcom Arcade iPhone app will allow you to play emulated versions of Street Fighter II, Commando, Ghouls 'n Ghosts and 1942 with a choice of three payment options: \$3 once-off for unlimited plays, or \$0.99 for a token that entitles you to a few games. Best of all, non-payers can play three times per day for absolutely no money - not initially, and not per play. If you're an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch owner and love experiencing the combined pain and joy of retro-gaming, this is a great way to waste a few hours of vour life.

#### DA-DUN-DA DA-DUN-DUN: BATTLEFIELD PLAY4FREE ANNOUNCED

Attention: there's a new Battlefield in the works. It's being developed by the same folks who brought us Battlefield Heroes, and just as it is with that game, Battlefield Play4Free will be free to play. The title of the game is pretty self-explanatory really. 32 players will be able to duke it out in a game that combines "the most popular maps from Battlefield 2 with the familiar classes and powerful weapons of Battlefield: Bad Company 2." Pwn faces online and you'll "earn in-game currency to spend on a massive array of devastating weapons and equipment." Don't be surprised if microtransactions worm their way into the game.



The Indie Investigator

by Rodain Joubert

#### We be jammin' again

SCREW THE MAYANS: JANUARY 2011 Shall be the next time of appointed chaos and upheaval in our existence as people all over the world gather at hidden venues, swear fealty to Nolan Bushnell and get on with forty-eight solid hours of sinister machinations in front of glowing screens and churning CPUs. There will be tank explosions, shadowy monsters, heroic deeds and rocket launchers aplenty. And they will call this the 2011 Global Game Jam.

Being a local indie column, it would be sacrilegious to pass up mention of this event's local leg being organised at Cape Town. From the user's side, what happens is pretty simple: groups of local game developers have the opportunity to rock up on an otherwise ordinary Friday afternoon, receive the theme for some sort of game that they'll have to create over the next few days, then spend the next 48 hours furiously coding, arting, sounding and designing their short-term magnum opus (caffeine craziness optional). In simpler terms: get together with

There will be tank explosions, shadowy monsters, heroic deeds and rocket launchers aplenty. And they will call this the 2011 Global Game lam.

like-minded locals and make cool stuff within a time limit!

The competition themes are typically broad enough for people to design whatever they want -- last year simply specified "deception", and a whole manner of intriguing projects were created around this core concept. Additional constraints are put in place as "bonus achievements" for particularly determined designers (only use 16 colours, make all sound effects in the game with your own body, refuse to drink any coffee, and so on).

Participants don't need to be game development pros or hardcore coders. Among last year's entrants were teams using such tools as XNA, Unity and even Game Maker to great effect. Hobbyists, students and professionals alike rubbed byte-coded shoulders with one another as they shared in the goal that all real game developers have in common: just making something that's damn fun to play.

At the time of writing, details have been limited on the upcoming venue for Cape Town's Game Jam chapter, but more information should be available on the event's website (www.globalgamejam. org/sites/2011/cape-town-uct). General Jam information can also be found at http://www.globalgamejam.org/

Hope to see some of you there!



### MXit opens up its platform for application and game development

**OVE IT OR HATE** it, MXit is huge; not just locally, but since their expansion into international markets, it's grown to have millions of subscribers to their social networking service. While the company is secretive on the exact figure that makes up its userbase, in June 2010 alone, MXit's network saw over 10.1 billion messages sent from mobile devices. Fully aware of their position, MXit CEO Herman Heunis had a notion to extend the service to include full support for third-party applications and games. That notion was in February of this year, and nine months later at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study, to a room filled with journalists, businesspeople and software developers, the MXit API was launched. NAG attended the event to bring you all the details; let's have a look at why this is such a big deal.

The MXit API, or Application Programming Interface, will allow software developers to create applications and games that operate on the MXit platform, use the built-in billing system (using MXit's own currency called Moola) for microtransactions, and put their products in the hands of millions of users worldwide. It's the same principle that allows Facebook to be filled with apps and games.

If you're a software developer and have some bright ideas for a mobile game, now is the time to jump on board. The system allows for any size or scope of game from any size or scope of company: from a single programmer operating out of their home to a massive studio. Here's what you need to get involved: Microsoft Visual Studio 2008 Express or better; the MXit External App SDK; a registered MXit service name and password; and a hosting environment. The first part is easy: MS VS 2008 Express is free and can be downloaded from **www.msdn.com**. The second two requirements are also easy enough; simply log on to **code.mxit.com**, register an account and you'll be good to go within minutes. The last requirement is potentially costly, but not complicated; each application must be hosted by the developer – Mxit currently isn't offering any hosting on their servers. This is where the only real potential pitfall springs up: as all applications are essentially web-based (and susceptible to lag), not every type of game is suitable, but you can bet your bottom dollar that typical social networking games will be abundant, as they're virtually unaffected by latency issues. Once you have all your ducks in a row, but before you begin the hard grind, you'll need to submit your proposed game or application to MXit for approval.

#### NEW COMMAND & CONQUER CASUALL CONFIRMED

During a lovely chat with Gamasutra, Electronic Arts senior VP and group general manager Nick Earl casually dropped news that a new Command & Conquer is in the works and that you can expect to see "fundamental innovation" from the new title. He also stated that the game is still "pretty far off." Part of this strangely unceremonious announcement alluded to the fact that the game was in development at Visceral Games, creators of Dead Space and Dante's Inferno. However, a short while later those allusions were shot down when it was stated that Earl was talking about EA as a whole, not Visceral Games specifically. It was said that the new *C&C* is in development. but it's being handled by a Los Angeles-based team that reports to Earl in Redwood Shores, California. Now that the superfluous details are out of the way, feel free to have a nice. delighted squeal at the thought of a new C&C.

### Your productivity ends here

Facebook games: evil time vampires or a meaningful advancement in social gaming? Regardless of what you think, both Square-Enix and Electronic Arts think Facebook games are fantastic ways to drum up support for existing franchises.

From the Squeenix side of things, we've got the unoriginally-named *Knights of the Crystals* and *Chocobo's Crystal Tower. Knights* is an RPG that involves you and your friends banding together to acquire treasure and slaughter your enemies, while Chocobo's Crystal Tower does almost exactly what you'd expect: allow players to collect and raise those loveable giant chicken things for... adventuring. Yeah, we didn't expect

that last bit either. Anyway, both are available right now as beta, where you'll be given the chance to hand over your money to purchase in-game stuff, and spam your friends with app requests. Go get 'em.

EA is playing things a little differently, by using Dragon Age Legends as a Facebook-based hype machine for Dragon Age 2. In this game, players will embark on their very own social networking story filled with RPG and strategy elements. Best of all, your participation in Legends could net you some in-game swag for use with *Dragon Age 2*. If you've got some time on your hands, hang on to it until January – when the beta for Legends launches.



# Call of Duty: Black Ops – the sun glasses?

Just in case you thought the *Call of Duty* merchandising couldn't get any weirder with the official, branded *Black Ops* Jeep, you can now get *COD: Black Ops*-branded sun glasses. They're not just *any* glasses though; they're "Pro Gaming Glasses", and probably the stupidest idea for brand merchandising ever.

Styled like a pair of 1970s aviator sun glasses, the Mad Catz and Gunnar collaboration is marketed as a must-have item for all *Call of Duty* fans. Really? Are there really gamers who are this crazy about the *COD* franchise? Why are they "Pro Gaming" glasses? How could they possibly contribute to how one plays a game? They do come with a *COD*-branded dog tag USB memory stick that has an Earth-shatteringly colossal 1GB of space though! That's got to count for something, right? Yeah, didn't think it would. Still, the lenses are yellow so at least you'll get to look like Trayis Touchdown from *No More Heroes*.

# In the future, your PC brings you StarCraft build orders

That headline's not entirely true, because it's not going to happen in the future: it's happening right frikkin' now. Allow us to explain. There's this guy who calls himself Lomilar over at <code>StarCraft</code> <code>II</code> forum Teamliquid. He's going bananas over a program he's been coding called EvolutionChamber. What this simple Java-based application does is test <code>SC</code> <code>II</code> build orders to produce the most efficient, fully optimised build orders based on a set of predefined parameters.

Say you want to get four Ultralisks out as quickly as possible. Tell the app that that's the case and it will go to work finding you the quickest, most efficient way to do so, spitting out an optimum build order once it's completed its calculations. This obviously means that, in its current form, this app will only be useful for devising all-in strategies that'll probably leave you vulnerable in the long term. At the moment, the application only works for Zerg build orders, but Protoss and Terran versions will apparently be available soon. This application was used to create a devastating build order dubbed the 7-Roach Rush which caused quite a furore over at Battle.net, where people were convinced that Protoss could not defend against the 7-Roach Rush, **even if they knew it was coming**. It's been settled that Protoss can fend it off, but only with a very specific set of counter strategies. It's obviously been labelled an all-in cheese build.

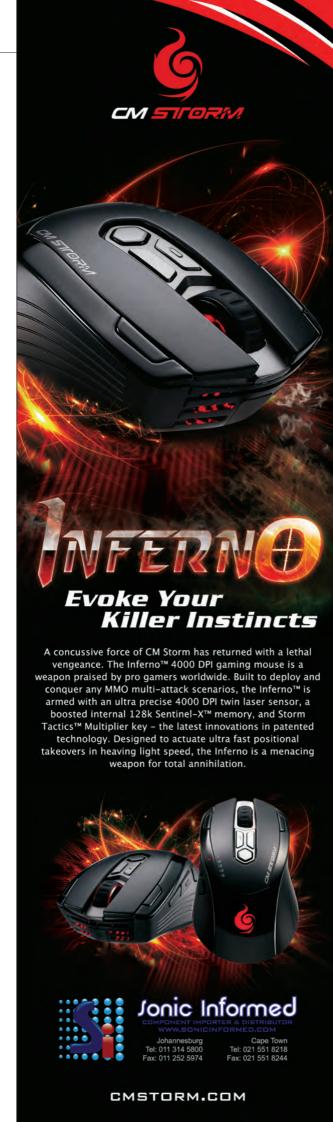
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#### >> STUPIDITY - IT'S EVERYWHERE

Here's a tip that may save your dirty life of crime at some point: if you're going to steal stuff, try to refrain from selling it to the person you stole it from. Unless that's kind of the point and you're aiming for some light-hearted crime caper/twisted tale of vengeance that'll later become a blockbuster action-comedy movie starring Brad Pitt and George Clooney or something – then it's okay.

25-year-old Masashi Osawa spotted a PSP and a couple of CDs in a car parked outside an electronics store. Choosing to do the honourable thing, Osawa continued on his merry way, instantly forgetting about what he'd seen in the car thereby ending this news piece right here. . Well, that's what he should have done. Instead, he broke into the car. snagged himself a PSP and several CDs, and then headed straight for the electronics store to try to sell his newly procured belongings. The clerk he tried to sell them to, however, thought the items looked familiar and went to check his car which he found had been broken into. Queue blinding lights, blaring sirens and a sudden flash of handcuffs. and Osawa found himself under arrest.

Stealing is bad, kids. Getting caught stealing by being an idiot, thus becoming LOL material on the Internet is even worse. Remember that.



Miktar's Meanderings

by Miktar Dracon

# Friends with Cognitive Benefits

ERE ARE THE CLIFFSNOTES¹ for several columns that will never be

- Publishers get upset when a critic scores their game low, because publishers still see reviewers as an extension of their marketing arm: there only to soothe the sheep so they'll keep buying the publisher's products.
- The Gamer is someone who plays games - and tends to play them all because they start with a love of Game Theory<sup>2</sup> and work their way up; while the Casual<sup>3</sup> is someone who plays a limited selection of popular games, be that Bejewelled, Halo, Counter-Strike or Call
- The idea that "casual games" have to be dumbed-down mini-games is an entirely fictional construct created by marketers who needed a way to prop up another fictional construct: the "real

"A game is a chance to test your understanding of a set of rules you're learning".

gamer" that does not play "non-games", so that investors will fund billion-dollar epic games.

- When you ask people what a "game" is you get a different answer each time, but a local game developer offers an astute and concise encapsulation: "A game is a chance to test your understanding of a set of rules you're learning"
- If you can't find enjoyment in a game of pinball<sup>5</sup>, you're probably not a Gamer.
- Something people who play games competitively need to learn is "when to Hold and when to Fold", which is Poker terminology I'm using to express the idea that playing too hard does in fact make you a worse player.
- Games are art, if you go by what Scott McCloud's said: "Art, as I see it, is any human activity which doesn't grow out of either of our species' two basic instincts: survival and reproduction.
- Aren't footnotes annoying?

- 1 CliffsNotes are an American study guide, providing brief overviews of subjects so that lazy students don't have to actually read all the assigned material.
- 2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game\_theory (Don't be afraid of the math, it's not required)
- 3 Not to be confused with the fictional "Casual Gamer".
- 4 http://www.qcfdesign.com/ (Creators of Desktop Dungeons)
- 5 Pinball FX 2 is free on Xbox Live Arcade, although you need to buy tables for it. Totally worth it



# Play more games for less money

**WHEN AN MMORPG KNOCKS** down its subscription fees or in any way alters its fee structure to pull in more paying players, it's often seen as a sign of failure. On the other hand, many such games simply cannot survive in this competitive market without resorting to some kooky methods to bring all the boys to their yard - Age of Conan and EVE Online are perfect examples of "poorly performing" MMOs that simply needed their fees tweaked to keep them running, while not necessarily being F2P.

That's certainly the thought wracking around Cryptic Studio CEO Jack Emmert's head. Star Trek Online has been underperforming of late and the studio is seriously considering making the move to freeto-play with supporting micro-transactions to bring in the much-needed bacon.

Seemingly basing the decision on public demand and the success that Turbine Inc.

has enjoyed since Dungeons and Dragons Online as well as, more recently, Lord of the Rings Online went the free-to-play route, Emmert is looking to Champions Online's upcoming subscription model for inspiration.

'We're not sold one way or the other with Star Trek yet. If people want Star Trek to go free-to-play then get in and play Champions and help make it a great success, because that would send a strong message," said Emmert in reference to Champion's move to free-to-play, which is set to land in Q1 of

'If we did Turbine's level of success that would certainly merit the discussion!" But, he added: "There are more people than just I on that decision and I can't begin to say it would be an automatic 'Yes, we'd do it.'

'We hope for a success as big as DDO," said Emmert. "That would be great – but I wouldn't say we're betting on it.'



Despite numerous delays, Gran Turismo 5 has finally gone gold, which means that the game is complete and currently (at the time of writing) sitting in a factory somewhere undergoing reproduction. What that means for you is that GT5 will definitely be available this year.

In related news, GT6 is already in development over at Polyphony Digital. Confirmed by GT's creator, Kazunori Yamauchi, during a recent interview, he simply replied "yes" when asked if the next title is in production.

'It's not something that we can talk that lightly on," he explained. "It took 2,000 days to get all the ideas that went into GT5. It's just too early to be talking about GT6.

That same man is the reason why GT5 experienced so many delays. After suffering poor user feedback based off their very first game – *Motor Toon Grand Prix* on the original PlayStation – courtesy of Sony urging them to send it on its way despite Yamauchi's feelings that the game was incomplete, he's going to ensure that this mistake is not repeated.

"All the things I thought were not enough yet; the users said the exact same thing when the game came out. That was something I regretted very much when that happened because I knew it was coming. And that happened at the beginning of my career, and it was something I vowed would never happen again.

#### **EZIO BUDDIES** UP TO THE PS3

PS3 owners planning on grabbing a copy of Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood are going to score some free content simply for choosing to own a PlayStation. Copernicus Conspiracy is a full, free downloadable content pack that will be available to all purchasers from the first day of release. It features Nicolaus Copernicus, famous Renaissance astronomer, who's in a bit of a bind thanks to some unsociable types trying to conspire against him. Ezio will receive courier, assassination and protection missions from the scientist priest in an attempt to keep him alive and conspirator-free. There's currently no word on this DLC appearing on any other platforms; it looks like it's a PS3exclusive for the foreseeable future.

#### TRIBES UNIVERSE INCOMING

Hi-Rez Studios, developers of Global Agenda, have announced that they are now the proud owners of a license that we're very, very fond of here at NAG. They've acquired the rights to *Tribes* and they're creating a PvP-centric action MMO set in the jetpack-filled universe. Built on a modified version of the Unreal engine, you can expect large-scale battles boasting over 100 players. Mention of a "full, persistent world" and "huge outdoor maps" has been made. There'll be vehicles for both ground and air, and there will be jetpacks. One more time: there will be jetpacks. That's all you need to know.

#### Gaming Charts



#### PS<sub>3</sub>

Gran Turismo 5

FIFA 11

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

#### MOVF.

Move Motion Controller Sports Champions The Fight

#### **XBOX 360**

Halo: Reach

Fable III

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

#### KINFCT

Sports

Sports Island Freedom

Sonic Free Riders

#### PS<sub>2</sub>

FIFA 11

WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2010 Pro Evolution Soccer 2011

#### PC

Call of Duty: Black Ops World of Warcraft: Cataclysm The Sims 3: Ambitions

#### **PSP**

God of War: Ghost of Sparta

Bakugan II

Football Manager 2011

#### WII

Donkey Kong Country Returns

Epic Mickey

Sonic Colours

#### DS

Sonic Colours

The Sims 3

Penguins of Madagascar

August 2010 figures provided by GfK www.gfksa.co.za

Sales by game platform

#### PS<sub>3</sub>

Sports Champions

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

Need for Speed: ProStreet

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

Burnout Paradise: The Ultimate Box

#### **XBOX 360**

Forza Motorsport 3

Halo 3: ODST

Halo: Reach

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

FIFA 09

Rugby 08

FIFA 10

Need for Speed: Most Wanted

The Sims 2: Castaway

#### PC

Need for Speed: Undercover

Crysis: Maximum Edition

The Sims 3: Fast Lane Stuff

StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty

C&C 4: Tiberian Twilight

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

Ben 10: Alien Force

**Burnout Dominator** 

Need for Speed: Carbon

Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters

#### WII

Wii Sports

New Super Mario Bros. Wii

Super Mario Galaxy 2

Wii Fit + Balance Board

Wii Sports Resort

#### DS

New Super Mario Bros.

Mario Kart DS

Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story

Super Mario 64 DS

Avatar: The Last Airbender

#### Civilization V explores, expands, exploits and exterminates with new DLC

This isn't so much a news piece as it is proof that Firaxis Games is continuing to support the thoroughly brilliant Civilization V. Along with a patch that was released recently that balances the game, mends some broken AI, fixes interface issues and more, Firaxis has also given us some free stuff. The Mongols Civilization and Scenario Pack has been released, so you can now lead the Mongols civilization through the ages as Genghis Khan, free of charge. For \$4.99, you can also buy the *Babylonian Civilization* Pack, which was previously exclusive to owners of the Digital Deluxe edition.

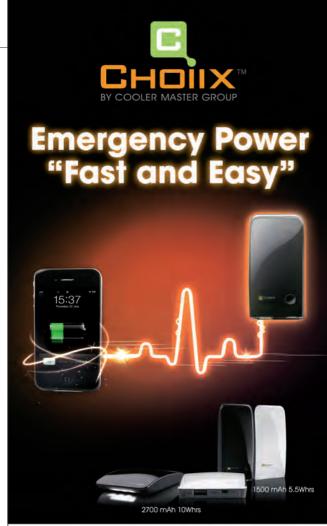


#### **CAPCOM NOW** HAS ONE LESS KEIJI INAFUNÉ

The father of Mega Man and producer of games like Dead Rising and Lost Planet has left Capcom after 23 years of working there. Inafune stated on his blog that he has no "stairs" left to climb within Capcom. "It would probably be good for me to sit gracefully in this seat and become a leading figure in the industry," he wrote. "However, I cannot do this. Settling down means death for a creator. As long as you are a creator, you cannot settle down." Eurogamer reports that Jun Takeuchi will serve as Inafune's replacement, taking on the responsibilities of corporate officer in addition to his current role as deputy head of consumer games and R&D Division, and general manager of R&D production. We wish both Mr Inafune and Mr Takeuchi the best of luck.

#### >> SHINJI MIKAMI BOUGHT OUT BY BETHESDA/ ZENIMAX

The creator of Resident Evil has had his recently founded game studio, Tango Gameworks, snatched up by ZeniMax Media, who also own Oblivion/Fallout 3 developer Bethesda Softworks and Doom/Quake/ Rage developer id Software Mikami and his team will remain in Tokyo and Mikami will stay on as head of the studio – at least until he's completed Shadows of the Damned for FA. in addition to an unannounced AAA title for Bethesda.





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#### I'm in ur jungle, hiding from ur doods

The story so far: Our poor badger has disappeared (somewhere in the über jungle of Pandora). He's easily distracted by bright lights... so you can imagine. We are looking for him and will let you know.

In the meantime the awesomeness of NAG has attracted someone else, a pretty blue thing that's still a little shy (this is our awkward way of saying she's hiding in the magazine). So, to win the prize you must now find Ney'turik, she's hiding in the magazine somewhere... Get going. Send your sitings to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line 'December Beavatar'.

#### November Winner





Shadley Kannemeyer. p40

#### One person who finds the Beavatar will win an Arcade Fighter Micro controller for PS3, sponsored

Dream Gear.

WIN!









# There's something about Minecraft

### 227KB of pure, addictive entertainment

**W**E'VE GOT A SECRET to tell you: NAG has been holding back. No, we don't have super-secret access to Duke Nukem Forever, nor do we know the exact release date for Diablo III. This is much simpler: we've become thoroughly addicted to a tiny indie game called Minecraft. The reason why we're only telling you about this game now is that it's still in its alpha stage of development, and we've planned on doing a giant feature when it reaches its next development milestone. But the truth is that we can't keep this gem from you any longer, so here's a little bit to whet your appetite and maybe even have you visit www.minecraft.net, pay the current price of €10 (R95) and suddenly find an excuse to give up on every real-life goal you've ever had.

Originally developed by one lone Swede -Markus "Notch" Persson – for the TIGSource forums, over the course of a single week in May 2009, Minecraft has since snowballed into the world of popularity, where it continues to reside and bring in lots and lots of money. It's a first-person sandbox game set in a giant world of destructible cubes. In the most interesting game mode (called Survival), players must carve out an existence for themselves from the landscape; this includes building a house,

fighting monsters, eating food and searching for resources. These resources are either found underground or on the surface, and include wood, iron, gold, stone, coal and dozens more. With these resources, players can craft items such as pick-axes, buckets, ladders, mine carts, doors, swords and armour, to make their lives easier and progress to the next tier of resourcegathering.

That's the very brief version of what *Minecraft* is, but thanks to a few implementations of physics and a bit of creative coding, it's become much more. Since Notch began charging for the game, over 560,000 people have purchased it, and that number continues to climb every day (at the time of writing, 7,057 people had purchased *Minecraft* in the previous 24 hours). The game also has a (currently crude and horribly buggy) multiplayer mode, in which up to 32 players must attempt to not only live and work together in the same world, but survive against the dangerous monsters that roam the caverns and surfaces of each randomly-generated world. It's there that our greatest interest lies, so expect a few interesting surprises from us when the multiplayer mode has been fully fleshed-out.

# FABLE: IT'S MORE THAN JUST A TRILOGY, SAYS MOLYNEUX

Now that Fable III is out and about in the world, you may be wondering if Fable is limited to a trilogy. Creator Peter Molyneux said some words recently that ought to ease your anxiety. "Forget about the word 'trilogy'," said Molyneux. "I hate limiting ourselves to a trilogy. I want you to feel that you're on a journey in *Fable* and I'm not going to tell you what happens at the end of Fable ///, but I don't think vou'll feel in anv way that you've reached the end of a trilogy." There you have it kids: we'll be getting more Fable in the future.

#### **>>**

#### COMPETITION WINNERS DREMEL:

August: Dorette Gower from Totiusdal

**September:** Richard Bustin from Parkrand October: Dion Anderson from Milnerton

#### RAGE RIG:

Philip van Rensburg, Menlo Park Pretoria

#### **ESET**

SUBSCRIPTION: October: Hendrik Iordaan from Bellville; M Ackerman from Middelburg; Josh & Shai Kadish from Cape Town; Nathan Pretorius from Helenabay



Isaac Clarke returns for another heart-pounding adventure, taking the fight to the Necromorphs in this action-horror experience. Survival is not the only thing on Isaac's mind in Dead Space 2 - this time, he calls the shots.

#### Distributors

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#### Caption of the Month

Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one. The winner will get a copy of *Gran Turismo 5* for PS3 from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to **ed@nag.co.za** with the subject line 'December Caption'.





**NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR:** "Okay, I know I had too much to drink last night, but I'm positive she didn't have a beard when I took her to bed!"



LAST MONTH'S WINNERS:

"Whoa... That is a very bad back-acne problem you got there!"

– Gerhard Erasmus

#### New TimeSplitters coming from Crytek UK?

Bear in mind that this is a bit fuzzy right now and isn't a thing that's definitely going to happen, but Crytek UK is in talks with publishers right now about possibly unleashing a new *TimeSplitters* title on the world. Crytek UK is primarily composed of former employees of Free Radical Design – the developers of *TimeSplitters*. If publishers show enough interest, this could become reality.

"We're talking to publishers at the moment about whether that's a viable route or not," said Karl Hilton, managing director. "There hasn't been a *TimeSplitters* game for quite a while. Obviously *TimeSplitters* is a FPS with a strong multiplayer element. The question is, is that the way to go with another one, or should it go down a different route, or should we be developing a new IP altogether?"

According to Hilton, publishers are quite positive about the TimeSplitters franchise, viewing it as "a really successful product." Make it happen guys – you can never have too many good multiplayer shooters.



Release List

Dates subject to change without notice

#### DECEMBER: WEEK 2

Donkey Kong Country Returns	Wii
World of Warcraft: Cataclysm	PC
Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D's Tag Force 5	PSP
Karaoke Revolution: Glee	Wii
Pictionary	DS
Truth or Lies	360, PS3, Wii
Get Fit With Mel B	360, PS3, Wii
Tron: Evolution	PC, 360, PS3, Wii, DS, PSP

#### **DECEMBER: TBA**

Gran Turismo 5 PS3

#### January: TBA

Mass Effect 2	PS3
Dead Space 2	PC, 360, PS3
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	PC, 360, PS3
F.E.A.R. 3	PC, 360, PS3

# Infinite possibilities with Unreal Engine 3

BioShock made phenomenal use of Unreal Engine 2.5 to bring Rapture to life. Stuff like the incredible water effects required to make BioShock as immersive as possible had to be created in-house over at Irrational Games. They managed to take the aging Unreal Engine 2.5 and make it look as good as any UE3-powered game out there. Now with BioShock Infinite, they're promising the same kind of graphical and technological leap for Unreal Engine 3.

"Right from the outset we realized that this was going to be a monumental undertaking on the tech side, but decided it was a challenge that we simply had to take on in order to give gamers the kind of quality experience they've come to expect from Irrational Games and BioShock," said Chris Kline, Irrational's tech director.

Infinite's floating city of Columbia requires a unique technical approach. "The very ground beneath your feet could fall out of the sky at any moment, which makes for some awesome gameplay and visuals but required us to create a completely new technology that we're calling 'Floating Worlds.'" A new lighting system, improved AI, better animation, a "custom sound propagation system" and dynamic weather are already a part of the exciting engine improvements being made over at Irrational.







N AN INDUSTRY FILLED with shooters and sports titles, it's refreshing to find that the idea of the tabletop-inspired, classic RPG is still alive. For those of you who played and enjoyed titles like Baldur's Gate, the original Fallout and Neverwinter Nights, you'll know that two development studios are responsible for bringing this genre into today's market: Black Isle and BioWare. And, while Black Isle no longer exists in its original form, we can still rely on BioWare to keep delivering quality RPGs that can stand up against the likes of *Crysis* or *FIFA*. 2009's *Dragon Age: Origins* did exactly that, but BioWare is convinced that it can build even further on this success. The company's core development principles for Dragon Age II are to improve the things that worked and fix those that were broken, but DA II is going to be much more than an elaborate patch list: quite a bit is going to change.

The game's storyline begins during the time of the Battle of Ostagar, as seen in Origins. Players will take on the role of a single, human character called Garrett Hawke, who can either be male or female and a choice of a warrior, rogue or mage. At the beginning of the game, you'll see Hawke and his or her family fleeing their burning home town of Lothering, trying desperately to escape the pursuing Darkspawn. It's here that two of the largest changes to the series are made evident: first, your choice of characters is incredibly limited when compared to *Origins*, but there's a good reason for this. Much like in *Mass Effect*, the notion of horizont forward. the notion of having a single, focused storyline ultimately leads to stronger storytelling, and in this case, full voice acting for the main character as well. The second change comes in the form of the storytelling method, called a framed narrative

Dragon Age II is a decade-long story – it's something that's already happened, and the player experiences the story being told by a quirky Dwarf named Varric to a Chantry Seeker, Cassandra. Throughout the story, Varric will embellish details and exaggerate to make the story more interesting, but Cassandra wants to hear the truth of the heroic tale of Garrett Hawk, and is quick to (literally) call BS when things become too difficult to believe. As an example of this, in the opening sequence we see Hawke and his fireflinging mage sister, Bethany, easily destroy a horde of Darkspawn. Both are loaded to the eyeballs with special abilities, tons of hit points and an eager attitude to vanquish the evil. But shortly afterwards, we cut to Varric and an annoyed-looking Cassandra, and it's soon established that we just partook in an utterly exaggerated version of what really happened. Cut back to the story; we see that there were a few more family members with Hawke and Bethany, and things are considerably tougher for the group. No longer can swaths of Darkspawn be cut down in a single swing of Hawke's mighty blade, and as it turns out, the only reason why the family managed to survive at all was thanks to the intervention of a familiar character from Origins: Flemeth in her dragon form.

Another department that has had plenty of attention is character interaction. The biggest change is a shift to a clearly *Mass Effect 2*-inspired dialogue system that generally limits your choices to sarcastic, aggressive or passive responses, with the occasional option to investigate a matter further. Additionally, your companions might ask you for your decision on a matter, such as "Should I attack them, or do you









"Cassandra wants to hear the truth of the heroic tale of Garrett Hawk, and is quick to (literally) call BS when things become too difficult to believe."







want to handle it?" Your choice will not only have an immediate impact on what you do next, but will also have longerterm effects on the bonds between Hawke and the companions. This is part of another area of improvement that BioWare is focused on: delivering both meaningful and immediate responses to player choices. No longer will you be forced to reload a save point hours back because you're unhappy with the outcome of a decision: the results will come quickly.

The concept of quicker reactions goes further than just dialogue; everything in the game has been made more responsive, especially combat. While the underlying system is still (mercifully) turn-based, you'll see more interesting animations and quicker turnaround in damage dealing when you change tactics. If all of this sounds a bit too much like an action-RPG, then don't worry; you'll still be able to pause the combat whenever you like, issue commands (although not queue them) and resume to watch the carnage. For PC players, you'll also have the ability to detach the game camera and pan around the battlefield to survey your challenges, so none of the tactical elements from Origins have been lost.

Based on the huge success that was *Dragon Age: Origins*, it's fair to be a little concerned that *Dragon* Age II won't be able to live up to its predecessor, but BioWare is doing everything they can to improve on the established successes and still pull in additional players without alienating the fans of the first game. It's going to be a tough balancing act, but if Mass Effect 2 is anything to go by, we think that Dragon Age II will be a worthy next title in a long line of actual and spiritual successors to Baldur's Gate.

#### Did the successful implementation of Mass Effect 2's comparatively simplified role-playing mechanics have any effect on the development of Dragon Age II?

Mike Laidlaw: Our approach with Dragon Age II was more focused on the presentation of a classic RPG, rather than looking at the changes made to the Mass Effect franchise. As a team, our main goal was to take the core systems and combat from Origins and refine them. The end result is a game that feels faster, more responsive and more "in the moment, while still having statistics, levels, talent tress, spells and so on be an important part of the gameplay.

#### How big is the game world in Dragon

**ML:** Dragon Age II takes place in the Free Marches, in and around the city of Kirkwall, a major port city that was once controlled by the now-crumbling Tevinter Empire. While the game doesn't cover the same geographical space as *Origins'* trek across Ferelden, we're very excited about the amount of time the game covers: an entire decade of history. And not just any decade, this is a tumultuous one, and one where your character becomes embroiled in events that will fundamentally change the Dragon Age World.

#### How much interaction will the player have with their party members? How deep are their back-stories and can we expect romantic sub-plots?

**ML:** Party members are something I consider key to Dragon Age, and DA II is no exception. There will certainly be romantic encounters, and they might even come about in ways the player wouldn't expect. Expanding on the *Origins* approval mechanic, there's a new, valid path to take with followers called rivalry. So, if you're friends with a city guard, but constantly working with criminals, or choosing to take the law into your own hands, expect that character to become your rival. Unlike disapproval from *Origins*, which was pretty much a "lose" condition, rivalry offers benefits and story interactions unique to that path, and yes, even rivals can fall in love

#### Will the choice of character class and gender have any effect on the game's story and the situations the player finds him or herself in?

ML: Absolutely. In fact, in some pretty significant ways, which are entirely riddled with spoilers!

#### Who are Cassandra and Varric?

ML: Cassandra and Varric are the narrators of the story. They exist in what we call "the frame" around the story's frame narrative, and in terms of timeline, they're at the end of the decade that the game covers. They know what's happened, and how the world's been affected by Hawke, but what

Cassandra wants to know is why. In many ways, she represents the player, in that she's near-desperate to find out exactly how Hawke was involved in events that have shaped the world. Varric, in contrast, knows the why, and is insistent on slowing Cassandra down. To not let her jump to the end, but to give her the context behind the decisions that were made. And it's because of that insistence that the player can directly affect how these two interact. Choices you make in the game shape the story unfolding in front of you.

#### Will party members have access to spells and abilities not available to the player character?

ML: Yes, actually. Each class has access to a number of trees that represent skills





"Our approach with Dragon Age II was more focused on the presentation of a classic RPG, rather than looking at the changes made to the Mass Effect franchise."





"At its heart, *Dragon Age II* is a much more personal story than Origins was, since it's so closely focused on the rise to power by your character."







with specific weapons, or more general class abilities (such as the rogue's ability to leap clear of foes, which can be performed regardless of weapon), and the followers have access to these, same as Hawke. Each follower, however, also has a unique talent or spell tree that only they can access. These trees contain powers that tie directly into that follower's backstory.

And, of course, Hawke has access to things that no one else does.

#### Will there be a crafting system or customisable gear?

ML: Like Origins, you'll have control over your equipment, there will be a crafting system in place, and also like *Origins*, you'll have access to, dare I say it? Enchantment? Enchantment!

#### How much impact will the players' choices have in the game?

**ML:** Quite a bit, and I think this time we've struck an interesting balance between choices that are world-changing (and there are a few of those, certainly), and choices that are deeply personal. At its heart, *Dragon Age II* is a much more personal story than Origins was, since it's so closely focused on the rise to power by your character. Surrounding that story, though, there are themes of family, friendship and loyalty that I think will

really resonate with our fans.

#### Is there a vision for the series' future, i.e. has it been designed and written as a multi-part game?

**ML: I**'m not a big fan of designing multi-part games, insofar as there's a huge danger of your game feeling incomplete if you lop off the ending. That said, there is absolutely a larger vision for the franchise and a story arc that we have planned out for the future. When dealing with a world as complex as Thedas, you need to have an idea what's coming in the future, so you can properly lay the groundwork for what's ahead in earlier titles. For instance, a lot of people have already noticed that Nathaniel from Awakening spent a year in Kirkwall before returning to Ferelden. Coincidence? I think not.

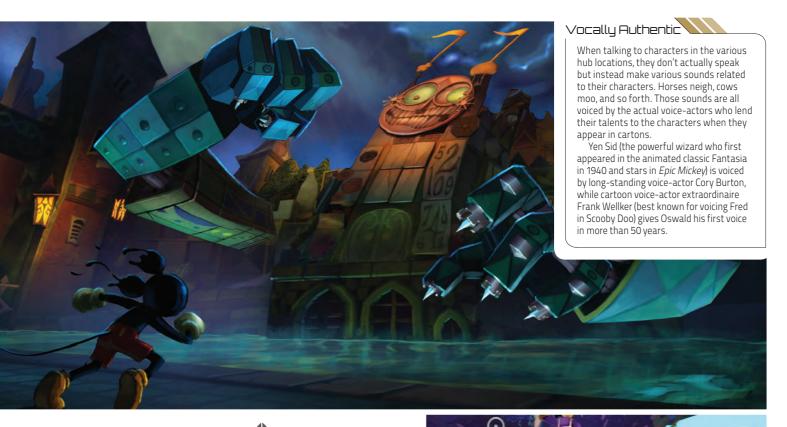
#### Has the tactics system been expanded upon to allow for more complex conditions

**ML:** We've taken a long look at tactics, and while we don't want to change the system to be overly complex, and inaccessible to new users, tactics fans will be happy to know they'll have access to more slots, more easily.

#### Should we keep our saved games for Dragon Age III?

ML: Oh my yes. NAG

**Geoff Burrows** 



Epic Mickey

Em Aey See, Kay Eee Why... em-oh-you-ess-ee!

**GENRE** > Action adventure

360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

AN MICKEY MOUSE REALLY take on Master Chief with his new epic actionadventure? Warren Spector, creator of Deus Ex (and possibly Disney's biggest fan) seems to think so.

"Mickey can take on Master Chief," says Spector, and then jigs a little tap-dance for us as if to drive a point home. Thousands of pieces of Disney memorabilia litter the Junction Point offices. Every poster, figurine, statue, book and giant bust belongs to Spector. He may be a little obsessed, but who better to make a Mickey Mouse game than a self-professed "biggest fan", who also happens to be one of the most celebrated game creators of our time?

#### **IUNCTION POINT**

We were invited to Junction Point, an Austin, Texas-based developer of console games founded in 2005 by Spector with the lofty slogan of "Playstyle matters", to get some limited hands-on time with select levels from Epic Mickey for the Nintendo Wii. The game is a collaboration between Spector (best known for Ultima Underworld, System Shock, Crusader: No Remorse, Thief and Deus Ex) and Disney/Pixar. It is hoped that Epic Mickey will bring the character back into the spotlight after nearly a decade of shying away from centre stage. Junction Point started work on Epic Mickey in 2007.

Not since Disney's Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse (1992) on the Super Nintendo, has the iconic mouse appeared in a videogame worth noting. Educational software doesn't count, because as we all know they aren't really videogames.







But what really raises an eyebrow with regards to Epic Mickey is the subtext being presented under its surprisingly twisted and dark veneer.

#### THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

The opening sequence is a frame-by-frame recreation of the 1936 short "Through The Mirror" (you can watch the original on YouTube http://youtu.be/Jj-XLPstSPI), until it diverges from the source material and sets the stage for the game's locations. Even then, everything in *Epic Mickey* draws inspiration from the legacy of Disney: its cartoons, theme parks, characters and history. "Why remake when it's already been made?" says Spector, pointing to a trash can in the game. Even that, is based on a Disney design.

Mickey and Minnie Mouse debuted in the cartoon short Plane Crazy, first released on May 15, 1928.



Without giving too much of the plot away, Mickey Mouse is pulled into a world of forgotten Disney creations by an evil entity known as the Phantom Blot. Many years earlier, Mickey unwittingly created the Phantom Blot and unleashed a catastrophe known as the Thinner Disaster upon the world and its inhabitants, turning it into the bleak and melancholy Wasteland. Luckily, Mickey managed to grab a magical paintbrush on his way down before ending up in Dark Beauty Castle where a Mad Doctor tries to rip out Mickey's heart.

#### HEARTLESS

The platforming basics are there: jumping, double-jumping and spin-jumping (shaking the Wiimote like Super Mario Galaxy). Using





since 1930.

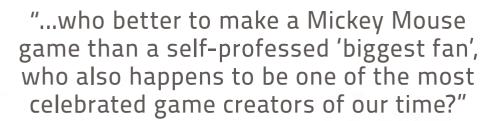
the magical paintbrush you aim at the screen (while running around) and spray paint or thinner, reviving or destroying parts of the game world like enemies and environmental elements. The paint/thinner mechanic is integral to the experience and not only determines how you approach situations, but how the inhabitants of the world respond to you.

After traversing through a 2D platforming action stage modelled after Mickey and the Beanstalk (each of the 2D platforming sections acts as a bridge between areas and serve as "pallet cleansers," says Spector) we end up facing the game's first boss: a huge clock tower complete with insane expression and giant mechanical arms that try to crush you. The eerie background remix of It's A Small World in down-tempo off-key makes for a transformative musical backdrop to the Clocktower Boss. You can try to paint over the boss's arms until you reach its face, restoring its happy smile, or you can thin out the arms until they destroy themselves when smashing. If you beat the boss with paint, or with thinner, you get a permanent capacity increase for the one you used.

#### MEAN STREET

Based on Disneyland's Main Street USA, we got to explore this hub level to get a feel for how the quest system works, and see how the various forgotten Disney characters are incorporated. The hub locations are populated by familiar Disney characters but not the established faces you may remember. This is after all, a word for the forgotten. Offshoots and variations of the classic characters make their home here, cutting-room floor designs that never gained mainstream appreciation.

The hub areas are about exploration, cunning use of paint and thinner lets you get up high into the rooftops and find hidden items (there are lots of collectibles, over 100 pins that you can't get in just one play-through as your choices impact which areas/characters you can access). We had to find gears and an energy source to power a projector, so we could get to a new location. By talking to and doing tasks for old-time favourites like Horace Horsecollar, the cow Gilda and Big Bad Pete (a variant of Peg-Leg Pete), we bought a sword once used by Captain Hook and managed to proceed.













#### Animation Station

The various 2D levels that connect areas are all based on classic short cartoons from Disney. You can watch the original cartoons thanks to YouTube, and get a feel for the many elements the levels take inspiration from.

Steamboat Willy: http://youtu.be/REbZ082tkgw Oh What A Knight: http://youtu.be/JPtxPEG3ltc Plutopia: http://youtu.be/SHZqmYRh8f0











#### Help I'm Lost/Stuck!

If you ever find yourself unsure of where to go next, you raise the Wiimote into the air as if you're raising your hand in class. A guide light will appear to Mickey and direct him where he has to go. Also, if certain quests that you need to do are too hard, you can use E-Tickets you find scattered around the levels to buy the guest items needed to complete them, skipping the quest entirely but losing out on items/ rewards by doing so.





You can spray a character with thinner to turn them into a puddle of complaining ink, but you may feel bad for doing it. How you play determines the cost of items in shops, which shops appear and how the population reacts to you (or if there will even be a population at all). Matte paintings end-cap the various streets with fake vanishing-point continuations, while big cloud billboards surround the hub town (all put there by Oswald so that the population can pretend they're not in the middle of a wasteland). It's only when you stop to consider that all the small elements were placed purposefully, that the bigger picture reveals itself. Oswald may be your enemy, but he's also been trying to help everyone in Wasteland.

#### PAINTING A PICTURE

Warren Spector is a developer who understands silent narrative. Some of the best games of our time don't explicitly detail every bit of themselves: it's the missing notes from a melody that speak loudest. Epic Mickey has a lot of visible gameplay mechanics that work well together and are fun, like the utility Sketches you collect, an example being the Television Sketch you throw out to distract the game's enemies, the steam-punk Beetleworx and liquid

Blotlings, who can't resist the cathode light. There are Guardians to collect, up to three, that act as an instant paint or thinner shot of great power. The music even changes the more Guardians you have. There are tricky platforming sections that require you to paint-jump to restore a platform below you that had just been thinned out of existence by an enemy. The various delightfully animated 2D cut-scenes contain a lot of heart and often, sharp humour.

But look beyond the gameplay (which feels good and plays well) and you see that Epic Mickey is not about the mouse. Not really. It's a story of redemption, of estranged brothers learning to work together, and of a population of castoffs holding out against the odds, all while surrounded by a dangerous and foreboding wasteland. A wasteland created, albeit unwittingly, by Mickey himself. Oswald, twisted by jealousy for the fame he never had, having been cast in the shadow of his award-winning brother Mickey, is the one who set the plan in motion to steal Mickey's still-beating heart. Along the way, Mickey has to convince Oswald to work together against the Phantom Blot and save the forgotten.

That's *pretty* epic.

Miktar Dracon

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"...flying structures are collapsing, the city burns, and crazed mobs roam, ready to take out an unspecified anger on any stranger..."





**BioShock Infinite** 

First-Person Metaphor

**GENRE** > First-person shooter

**360 PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

Would You LIKE SOME pointed social commentary with your buffet table of Plasmids?

Irrational Games returns to the universe they created with the original BioShock. Squarely in the mould of the original game, BioShock Infinite drops the player into a first-person perspective shooting-andbiological-spell-flinging exploration of an avant-garde cityscape. But BioShock Infinite's Columbia shares little in common with deep-sea Rapture, being a floating city in the sky... or does it?

BioShock raised eyebrows with its unashamedly intellectual backstory and plot. Predicated on the economic and philosophical tenets of Objectivism, Rapture was an examination of a place gone wrong from the attempt to make a potentially impossible dream real. In Infinite, the sky city of Colombia exists decades before Rapture, but is based on its own philosophy: racial and nationalistic purity. The target is bigger and potentially far more controversial this time; Colombia is the pride of an alternate history United States of America, and features evocative propaganda strewn throughout it severe enough to make a Nazi blush. (A fresco of historical American president George Washington fighting down a tide of grimy, ethnically caricatured immigrants is something one can't un-see.)

Just as with Rapture though, something has gone wrong in paradise. When the player arrives in the city – waking up from having been apparently knocked out cold on the street - flying structures





are collapsing, the city burns, and crazed mobs roam, ready to take out an unspecified anger on any stranger, like you. But unlike BioShock, you're not alone. . The in-game engine-reveal trailer drops the bomb that another person is trapped in Columbia with you – a pretty lady who may be a sister or romantic interest, and just happens to have telekinesis, as demonstrated by some combination Plasmid attack antics. Does this insinuate the potential for a co-op campaign? Who knows; but co-op is ground to tread lightly if Irrational Games wishes to preserve the series-trademark sensation of exploring a world that is simultaneously alluring in its detail, and frightening in your isolation

Much of Infinite's propaganda posters were inspired by World War I posters.

save an army of mutated crazies and tenuous friendly radio contact.

Past the button-pushing of the metaphorical variety, it remains to be seen if Irrational Games can shake up the BioShock formula, though admittedly such a drastic change of scenery is welcome before underwater diesel punk wears out its welcome. The most interesting thing about a new BioShock title however - and the part that may have the developer sweating the most – is that we are interested to see what BioShock Infinite has to say, as much as how it plays. There aren't many contemporary game franchises that get to brag about that. NAG

Miktar Dracon



























Your favourite levels will still load just fine, but will actually look a lot better.



Turing Complete!

**GENRE** > Platform

360 **PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

**'HE REVEAL OF** *LITTLEBIGPLANET 2* couldn't help but inspire a touch of scepticism. After all, creators Media Molecule had oft said that LittleBigPlanet was a platform, not a series of games to be replaced by sequels. And in a game that hinges on user generated content and authorship, a platform (of a platform game) is the way to go.

In fairness, Media Molecule has done well to justify a full-on disc-based sequel. The upgrades to the LBP physics engine are almost too numerous to list (and, as the developer pointed out, would have been over 4GB of data had they tried to make it a patch job for the original game). Suffice to say that LBP2 gives creators a massively expanded toolset, with the most exciting new feature being the ability to compress hand-built machines and circuits down to an automated "chip" for placement in devices, in vehicles, on the brand new Sackbot AI characters... or to send to other players.

The ability to create is also a fair bit more flexible. Media Molecule points out that they themselves have already created real-time strategy games and RPGs using the LBP2 toolset. Say what? Is this LittleBigStarcraft II SDK?

Past that, LittleBigPlanet 2 crucially supports the full range of existing levels and creations from the LBP community. Your favourite levels will still load just fine, but will actually look a lot better. Despite the fact that LBP1 had some of the most advanced materials and shader effects seen in a console game, LBP2 easily outperforms it once one begins to examine the finer details. All this applies to the old content, though it

may tempt creators to give past creations a fresh coat of paint in order to take full advantage of the improvements.

The one thing not returning are LittleBigPlanet's stock campaign stages. LBP2 features a brand new campaign of stages that are a fair bit more intricate and show off just what you can do with the new technology. Four-player local and online co-operative play is still front and centre, but the online interface and content-sharing system will see a 100% overhaul, with emphasis on addressing the concerns raised by LBP power users. Media Molecule knows that LittleBigPlanet is a game that created a devoted following and its community is not

Plot wise, Sackboy is

rescued from "The Negativitron" by Larry Da Vinci, leader of the semi-secret semi-organized group known as "The something to be taken lightly.

As a show of that seriousness, it has been revealed that LBP2's November 2010 release date has been pushed back to early 2011. It's not hard to imagine Sony's desire to get a flagship PS3 title out the door for Christmas (along with GT5), but it seems Media Molecule is not going to ship *LBP2* until they are entirely satisfied (and with some luck, avoid the online issues that bothered *LBP* at launch for a few weeks). With a game whose under-the-hood intricacy is as far off the charts as LittleBigPlanet, delays for testing and polish more evoke a brow-wipe of relief, than frustration. NAG

Miktar Dracon



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Devil May Cry was originally supposed to be a sequel to Resident



# **DmC: Devil May Cry**

It's Devil May Cry, but WAY more hip.

**GENRE** > Action Fighting

**360 PS3** WII

PS2 PSP

**BY NOW THE WORD** has made the rounds: the next *Devil May Cry* game is *DmC*, and it's being made by... Ninja Theory?

This was the news that outright baffled just about everyone at the 2010 Tokyo Game Show. As of late, Japanese publishers have accelerated Western game development collaboration. But this is Devil May Cry - the (stylish) action game franchise for the hardest of the hardcore. Sales of the previous entry in the series - Devil May Cry 4 - were respectable. Fans had begun tapping toes, wondering just when Devil May Cry 5 would be revealed. So why the shake up?

Alex Jones of Capcom USA said in a recent interview, "Actually, what happened was that Capcom Japan came to Capcom America and said, 'We want you to explore a new direction for *Devil May Cry.*" A new direction indeed! The TGS trailer for DmC shocked fans around the world with its anaemic, rough-and-tumble re-jiggering of Dante as an apparently homeless wanderer, with dirty tattered clothing, as he is pursued through an unknown city by demons darker and more fetishist than in prior games.

But Capcom says this is the "real" Dante. Not a reboot, not a different character; just younger, with Ninja Theory's crack at the series representing a new telling of Dante's earliest origin story. (Fans might want to remember that Devil May Cry 3, while technically a prequel to the original DMC, really wasn't set very far in the past.) And, as Capcom was quick to point out, this strangely unfamiliar Dante's black hair is already turning white at the roots - Hmm..

The TGS trailer was not without some

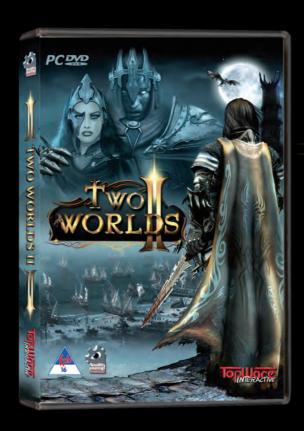


"But crossing things up were intentionally cryptic scenes of this fresh Dante being brutally interrogated by the police of suspiciously named Limbo City...'

DMC trademarks... or some intriguing elements. Dante's famous twin pistols, Ebony and Ivory, were there along with their (literally) magical unlimited ammunition. So were big sword combinations and air juggles. But crossing things up were intentionally cryptic scenes of this fresh Dante being brutally interrogated by the police of suspiciously named Limbo City... who insist that he's not Dante. Will DmC involve mindscrew elements? At least we're assured that it won't "all be a dream", since this seeming impostor is confirmed to be the man himself, albeit young and raw.

Beyond this, what *DmC* will turn into remains an enigma – Ninja Theory has proven not incapable, with their latest title Enslaved earning approval both critically and among fans of Rock'Em Sock'Em action adventures. There can be no doubt however that with their next game Ninja Theory is sitting down at the adult table and being asked to carve up the roast. There's a lot to prove before fans will accept that they are up to the task. NAG

Miktar Dracon







### TWO WORLDS II

Two WORLDS)

"Two Worlds II" offers the perfect RPG mix of sheer atmosphere and dazzling technology.

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Forge alliances and seek out those in need of assistance.
But be mindful of your decisions,
they often bear consequences with a further reach
than you may realize.

Sometimes you just can't choose your company...
of all the races that could have freed you from Gandohar's
dungeons, why on earth does a troop of
normally hostile Orcs decide to do it?



TRUST in times
of TREASON?







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#### The Reviewers

#### What are you doing this holiday?

#### **CHRIS**

I'm gettin' the f\*\*\* outta Dodge, and I ain't never comin' back, suckers! But I'll miss you all. Well some of you, at least.



#### **ALEX**

Besides the typical debaucheries, l'expect to seriously geek out with games, to enjoy my recent PC upgrades. Top of the list will be [too long, snip]



#### MICHAEL

Shooting root on a beach somewhere until my nuts are brown all over.



#### **MIKTAR**

With chest-high snow expected this winter. probably most of my time will be spent catching up on my game backlog [too long, snip]



#### **TARRYN**

Complaining about the weather.



#### MIKLÓS

Going to Cape Town for Christmas. Once there I'll spend twelve days moaning about how crappy the weather is in an attempt to fool myself [too long, snip]



#### DANE

Dane is apparently already on holiday because he never replied to this question.



#### WALT

This festive season I will be trying to get through all the games that I want to play, but haven't had a chance to (because of all the ones I didn't [too long, snip]



#### JUNIOR

As little as possible, as many movies as possible, and a crapload of Black Ops.



#### **GEOFF**

I'll spend the first week sleeping, the second week eating pizza and the last week feeling remorse that I've just spent two weeks sleeping and eating pizza.



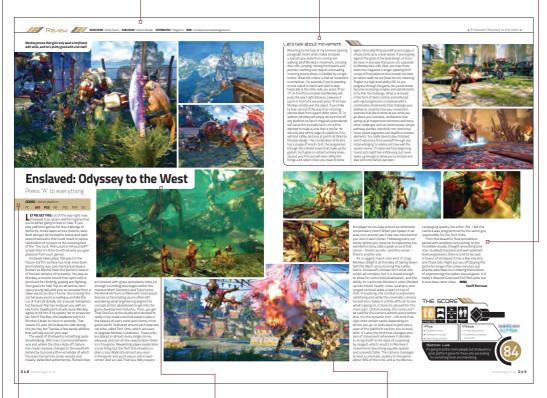
# Anatomy of a Review

A quick guide to the NAG reviews section

Vital Info: Who made it, who's putting it on shelves and where to find more information

Box Outs: More good stuff. Just in a box.

**The Review:** These are words that make up our opinion on the game. You didn't really need us to tell you that, did you?



Genre and Platforms: What kind of game is it and what will it run on? All available platforms are bolded. The one we reviewed it on is red.

Game Name: It'd be a bit confusing if we left this bit out. There's also a summary line for added spice!

#### Screenshots and Captions:

A picture's worth a thousand words. The captions are mostly just fart jokes...

### The Score Box

Age Rating: Lets see some ID, son

Multiplayer Icons: How many players per copy, players per server, and players in co-op, respectively

**DRM:** Applies to PC games only: Internet connection required, disc required, or no DRM beyond a serial key

Online Services: Is the game distributed/available over an online service, or does it gain additional features such as multiplayer by connecting to said service? Required services are bolded.

Plus/Minus: What we liked and didn't like, in convenient bullet-point format

Bottom Line: Here's where we boil down the entire review to one sentence. Because reading is hard...

#### THE SCORE Award: See below for details Score: Further simplifying the >Daline securces bottom line to a Games for Windows LIVE number out of 100 >Minus >Plus - Doesn't change much Enthralling setting Improved combat system Riveting story >Bottom Line Our second trip to Rapture is every bit as captivating as the first.



#### **Editor's Choice Award**

If a game bears this award, then it rocks. It does everything right - pure and simple. We don't hand these out every issue.



#### Must Play Award

Essential playing for fans of the genre. These awards aren't as rare as the Editor's Choice award, but if you see one, take note.



#### Pony Award

This isn't an award anyone can be proud of. If a game gets this award, then it's rubbish and you should avoid it like moss on a sandwich. We keep it only for the worst garbage.

#### Quick Hits



#### **SHANK**

It's kind of like Kill Bill, if The Bride was some Mexican dude instead of Uma Thurman. Shank is said dude and he's pretty pissed off because the gang he used to roll with kicked the crap out of him, murdered his girlfriend and left him for dead. That's where you step in, taking control of Shank on his quest for vengeance against the dastardly people who betrayed him. Shank is a side-scrolling, excessively stylish 2D beat 'em up. It's like if Final Fight was created by Robert Rodriguez. You've got three weapon slots: one for your dual-wielded shanks (your default weapon), one for heavy weapons (like a chainsaw or dual machetes) and another for ranged weapons (like Shank's pistols or an Uzi). The goal is to violently slaughter ridiculous amounts of dudes while not getting yourself killed in the process. You do this by grappling, pouncing, stabbing, dismembering and blasting your way through levels, most of which have a cool boss fight at the end. It's all great fun and it's presented with one of the slickest visual styles you'll ever see. It gets a bit repetitive, but it's great fun, has a cooperative campaign and is well worth

Bottom line: It's slick, it's stylish, it's Shank.



### SEGA MEGA DRIVE CLASSIC COLLECTION

If you owned a SEGA Mega Drive, there's a good chance that you'll recognise at least a few of the titles in this pack. While not every game included could be called a must-play, at least half of them are worthy of that title, with Golden Axe, Comix Zone and Sonic the Hedgehog standing out above the rest. The entire collection is packaged in a neat, straightforward front-end, and each game supports widescreen resolutions, many controller types and save/load functions, in case the fifteen or more years since you've last played these challenging titles has taken the edge off your skills.

**Bottom line:** Great for those who'd like to relive a part of their childhood with added modern conveniences.

#### Web Scores

How do we measure up? We scour the Net to find out what the rest of the world thinks.

NAG // Metacritic average // Game Rankings average

#### CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS



#### MEDAL OF HONOR



#### **FABLE III**



STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II



#### F1 2010



#### CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW



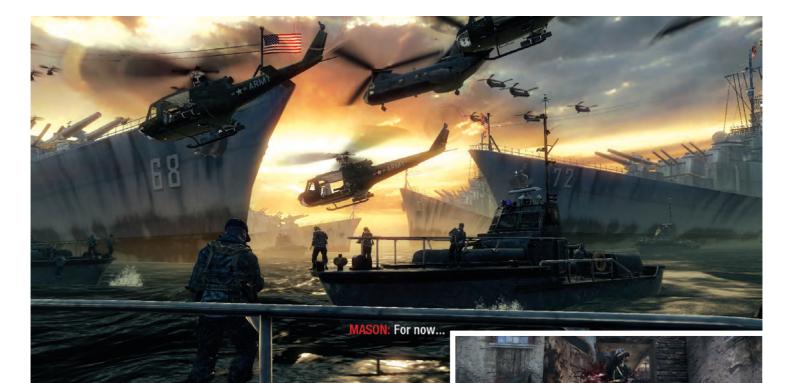


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**We LIVE games!**Facebook Group: NAG Magazine





# Call of Duty: Black Ops

Can't touch this

**GENRE** > First-Person Shooter

360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

**'HERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT** Call of Duty. It THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT Carror SELF, turns us into giddy schoolgirls without fail year after year as we anxiously anticipate that one day in November where Christmas, birthdays, free sex and jetpacks are overshadowed by that familiar logo. No matter how many annoying clannies piss us off with their constant whining, no matter how much the campers make us hate habitually loading up the game, we always manage to work ourselves into a frenzy come International Call of Duty Day (which should be a public holiday - just sayin'). A lot is riding on Call of Duty: Black Ops. After all that Infinity Ward drama and intrigue, Treyarch suddenly went from being That Other COD Developer That Made Those Two World War II Thingies to having the hopes and dreams of millions of COD fans placed squarely on their shoulders - because it's doubtful that Infinity Ward will ever truly recover from the great IW exodus of 2010. Treyarch has moved on up out of WWII-bound settings and have gone all Cold War on us. I've eaten, breathed and dreamt Black Ops for days now and I'm here to tell you that Treyarch have just pwned every doubtfilled hater out there.

#### LOOK MOM! I'M SUCH A HERO!

First up: single player. We got hold of some totally real and not at all dreamt up minutes of a very believable and non-contrived meeting between key people at Treyarch, and this is how it went:

Producer Man 1: Alright, so IW is down, baby. Let's kick 'em where it hurts and prove that

we can deliver a single-player campaign that punches Modern Warfare right in the facehole

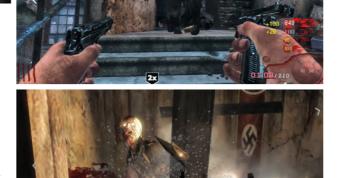
Design Guy 3: Hell yeah! But, like... how? Producer Lady 7: Um... That's a good question. How the hell did they manage to do it?

Man of Dubious Value 2: I... I just don't know Producer Lady 7. I just don't know. Intern Dude 10: Guys, I think that -

Artsy Design Loser 2: Hey, you know, Kirby's made of string in his new game and people love the crap out of it. What if we made Black Ops out of string to keep people too fixated on all the cute to care about whether or not our single player is any good?

**Intern Dude 10:** Seriously, don't do that. Guys, just make things explode. Constantly. Like, at the very least an explosion every three seconds. Choppers, buildings, mountains, babies - keep nothing safe from the explosions. That's what you need to do. **Producer Man 1:** Hmmm... You know, I think the kid's got a point. Fire him and put my name on that idea. Right people - start building some 'splosions!

Black Ops' single player is so enigmatic, intense and riveting that you can't help but feel utterly compelled to make your way through it. As stated earlier, COD's gone Cold War, thrusting gamers kicking and screaming into a world of espionage and clandestine operations. It jumps back and forth through history, from the aftermath of World War II to the war in Vietnam and many other fictional, top-secret type moments in history. Not only that, but it also drags you across the world - one moment you're dodging bullets and racing along rooftops in Hong Kong, the next you're re-enacting The Great Escape (complete





#### zOMG where z = zombies

I don't want to say too much about this because we've already made it perfectly clear how infatuated we are with this facet of Treyarch's games. That and we might do a strategy guide for the zombie mode soon. All you need to know is this: Black Ops' cooperative zombie mode is as awesome, addictive and alluring as ever. In addition to Kino Der Toten (Theatre of the Dead), the default zombie map for Black Ops, there's also another secret zombie map that I won't spoil the awesomeness of by telling you exactly what it is. There are new zombie types, new weapons, new traps and more, all of which have reignited the zombie-massacring frenzy here at NAG. We'd all have bought the game just for the zombies.

#### Glorious secrets

In the main menu, you're strapped to a chair. Break out of that chair and you're treated to an amazing world of lovely, secretive secrets. In the console version, look directly down and mash the triggers to break free of your restraints. In the PC version, mash the spacebar and your right-mouse button in place of the triggers. Walk over to the PC  $\,$ in the room you're in and type one of the following commands:

zork: Play Zork. It's self-explanatory and totally awesome.

doa: Play Dead Ops Arcade, a top-down, dual-stick shooter filled to the brim with zombies and awesome.

help: View a list of commands for this ingame DOS prompt of awesome.

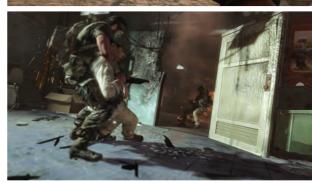
dir: View the directory listing. Browse the machine to find a whole heap of awesome.

It's like games within games. Whoa.













with awe-inspiring motorcycle chase) in Russia – and boy, there are many, many explosions along the way. Despite those obviously real and completely non-fictitious meeting notes above, however, this game doesn't even need those explosions to keep you engaged – although they do help. As is customary with *COD*, there's no shortage of Holy S\*\*t Moments in *Black Ops* that keep you hooked just so you can see what ridiculously improbable and pants-poopingly awesome moments the game can throw at you next, but it's the way the story has been so masterfully crafted that is the real driving force here. I don't want to spoil the phenomenal ride that Black Ops offers by divulging story details, but I will say that it's filled with conspiracy, action and suspense built around familiar COD gameplay. The way Treyarch has structured the story creates a wonderfully engaging atmosphere. The soundtrack is truly fantastic and the voice acting is mostly great, thus setting the tone for events nicely and I thought it was brilliant how the story unravels in a way that is completely fitting, considering primary protagonist Alex Mason's predicament. There's a great deal of variety in the gameplay and objectives, and I think it's great that *Black Ops* has strong ties to World at War, Treyarch's previous title.

If there's one thing that annoyed the hell out of me at times throughout the story, it's the Al. Particularly the teammate Al – it falls flat on its face a lot as they stand right beside their sworn enemies and blissfully ignore them while you get shot in the groin because you assumed that your buddy had the situation under control. Enemies also have a habit of standing out in the open while bullets rip off bits of them. It might be their penchant for miraculously surviving grenade blasts directly below them that makes them so courageous. When you've



got a single-player component where every element has been meticulously tweaked and enhanced to create the nigh-perfect experience that Black Ops' campaign offers, then little issues like occasionally broken Al seem extremely prominent. Either that or I'm just looking for something to complain about so that my love for *Black Ops* doesn't completely overwhelm this review with incessant praise. Others have complained about rampant bugs and broken single player, but thankfully I never encountered any problems.

To put all of the above as simply as possible: Treyarch have succeeded in creating a thoroughly enjoyable and irrefutably impressive single-player offering. It doesn't change the COD formula much, but it's as good as anything that Infinity Ward unleashed on gamers. Even if you don't play Black Ops online, it's still absolutely worth buying for the story alone.

#### STUPID IUGGERNOOB

Black Ops' story will keep you busy for around eight hours, but it's the multiplayer that's going to have you double-clicking that icon on your desktop for many months to come. Again, Treyarch haven't revolutionised COD, but they've altered, tweaked and improved it in many ways. The linear unlocks are made less restrictive by the introduction of COD Points – currency that you earn in addition to traditional experience. Earning experience still unlocks new weapons and toys, but to gain access to these wonderful new things with which to blow people up you need to also spend COD Points. Everything has a cost associated with it – from graphics for the new Playercard editor to attachments for guns you've bought. Killstreak rewards, weapon camo and perks – everything costs these glorious new *COD* moneys. Not being locked to a specific path for your









online experience is definitely a resounding improvement.

The abundance of new customisation options is astounding, allowing you to really create your own distinct online persona or create a standardised one for your clan to use. There's also a dizzying array of statistical information for your perusal. It'll tell you how many times you've killed with/ been killed by certain weapons. You can see which areas of the body you tend to hit the most when battling enemies (crotch shots FTW). Hot zones on maps are highlighted to show where most of the action happens. Everything is tracked and recorded to show you how well you're doing in multiplayer. Speaking of recorded – the new Theatre mode is a very welcome addition. Depending on the server settings, recordings of your games will be stored in a magical online place where you can then go to download and watch entire matches that you've recently played and then save them (or specific segments of them) and share them with friends if you think you had a particularly epic moment. It's useful for those people who'd like to analyse their performance and improve their game by constantly watching replays, but for those of us who just want to recap on how awesome we are, it's a very cool new feature. The multiplayer is as frenetic, fun and addictive as we've all come to expect, and I particularly like the

slight increase to player health – it makes gun battles much more intense and hunting down clannies campers (who then proceed to whinge about how everyone basically has Juggernaut now) much more satisfying. At the time of writing, there were performance problems and lag in the PC version, but Treyarch acknowledged the problem and were working on a fix. Hopefully, all is well by now. Aside from that, Black Ops now boasts the definitive COD multiplayer experience.

#### SO... WHAT'S THE VERDICT?

Treyarch has officially moved out of Infinity Ward's shadow. It hasn't redefined COD, so it hasn't quite overtaken IW – it's kinda just sprinting alongside the ghost of Infinity Ward. The single player is utterly amazing in every possible way, the multiplayer offers the best competitive multiplayer experience in the series to date. And it's got frikkin' zombies and Zork in it. It's a game so rich and feature-filled, a game that offers so much content that it's absolutely worth the price of admission. Black Ops makes me wish that Activision would give Treyarch the opportunity to create a new IP – because the studio's potential is astounding. Also, they put Gary Oldman, Ed Harris, Sam Worthington, zombies and gratuitous explosions in every orifice of the game. That automatically makes them awesome. NAG

**Dane Remendes** 

#### Come play with us

We've gone and put up a bunch of NAG servers for everyone, because we love you guys so much. Join us, so we can frag you in the face. We're considering banning anyone we find camping. Bear that in mind before going prone inside a bush somewhere. These are the servers:

 NAG Banana: TDM NAG Badger: FFA NAG For Science!: S&D

• NAG Your Mom: Team Tactical (rotates TDM, DOM, CTF, DEM and S&D)

# THE SCORE



>Plus





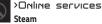






+ OMG zombies





#### >Minus

- Al occasionally stumbles

- A bit buggy



Look Listen

#### >Bottom Line

+ Addictive multiplayer

+ Phenomenal single player

Treyarch have proven without a shadow of a doubt that they're worthy of becoming the series' flagship studio. Black Ops is mind blowing.

CATACLYSM

# A NEW AGE HAS BEGUN



LEVEL 85 AWAITS





BATTLE AS WORGEN OR GOBLIN CONQUER THE ELEMENTAL PLANES

COMINGSOON



















# **Medal of Honor**

The runner-up, but a damn good one

**GENRE** > First-Person Shooter

360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP

ON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU read on the Internet. You probably shouldn't believe Tarryn's review of Medal of Honor over at NAG Online either, because Tarryn is crazy and you should never trust anybody who loves footnotes as much as she does. Joking aside though, I feel like I'm one of only a handful of reviewers who enjoyed *Medal* of Honor's single-player component. Let me tell you why.

#### ALONE WE STAND

So, you're in this car right. You're on some street in Afghanistan, trapped in an on-rails segment that gives you no explanation as to what the hell is going on other than you're off to find some Afghan informant named Tariq. Guy's brain is filled with useful information, see - information that you need because you're told you need it. Seeing as how you obviously need it and all (because, come on, they **said** so), you happily take on the role of Rabbit (not his real name LOL), a member of AFO (Advanced Force Operations) Neptune and one of those fancy special ops-type dudes called Tier 1 operators that EA made such a big deal about in all the marketing campaigns. Joining you are three Al companions, bringing the total number of Neptune's squad members up to four. The opening scene tells you everything you need to know about the gameplay: for the majority of your time with MoH, you'll be engaged in standard tactical-shooter gameplay. Just looking at the screenshots all over this page tells you everything you need to know about it. Duck behind cover, pop up occasionally to shoot things, repeat.

It's not revolutionary, but the gunplay is tight, smooth and polished, and there's a decent amount of variety - from sniping and stealth (complete with dodgy enemy Al) to last-stand situations and explosive raids on enemy strongholds.

There's a reason that *That Other* Modern-Day Tactical Shooter emphasises authenticity over realism: people want to be wowed. They want to see nukes. They want to see impossible situations being solved with improbable methods. They don't want to constantly be reminded of the real world and its problems while playing a game. This means that, while there are some incredible, awe-inspiring scripted events that'll leave your jaw flapping about on the ground, you're never shown anything truly shocking in MoH. Like, say, an invasion of the United States. Thing is, if you approach MoH and immediately let its real-world foundation put you off, you're never going to

appreciate the game for what it is. You need to evaluate the game on its own merits, not compare it to the competition. Negativity is contagious, and with all the negativity that came out of the early reviews, it's easy to understand why people would be negative about the game. Even the impossibly high expectations that people placed on it meant that this game was going to have a rocky start, but I truly feel that Danger Close has done a commendable job rebooting the *Medal of Honor* series. The gameplay definitely isn't going to win any awards for excessive originality, but it's the experience surrounding the game mechanics that is praiseworthy.

Throughout *MoH*, you experience the war in Afghanistan from the eyes of a number of different soldiers. There's the aforementioned Rabbit, but later you fill the shoes of two other characters: another Tier 1 operator code-named Deuce and



#### Together we fall

Right, the multiplayer: it's great – sort of. It has the potential to be great, but it's not balanced correctly for a game that tries to punch That Other Tactical Shooter in the face. It's smooth, hectic and fun for a while, but the DICE-developed, Frostbite-powered multiplayer component quickly becomes a huge chore when you see that every player online is taking advantage of a few annoying imbalances.

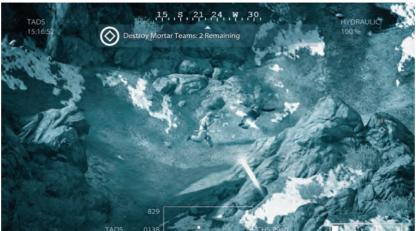
Firstly, your health: it's too low. That Other Game has slightly increased player health to make fire fights more interesting. In MoH, you're dead before you hear the bullets hit your flesh. It's the equivalent of playing Railgun Instagib, but never being able to turn it off. Secondly, campers: this game is too rewarding for players who are comfortable hiding in a shadowy corner somewhere, or sniping from the safety of a rooftop that nobody ever thinks to check because only an jerk would go up there in the first place. This wouldn't be such an irritation if there was some form of killcam, but no, you're left guessing as to where that sniper round came from, allowing that loser to safely stay perched in his hidey hole with no threat of retaliation. This issue isn't even exclusive to sniping. The three classes (Sniper, Special Ops and Rifleman) are all capable of killing from ridiculous range with very little effort. What this means is that in any given game, half the players will be snipers, a quarter of the remaining half will be hiding behind some rocks drinking tea, and the rest will desperately be trying to make some headway by playing using methods that are actually fun – or should be. Combat Mission, a game mode that sees you fighting to attack or defend a progressive sequence of objectives, would be great fun if you didn't spend all your time waiting to respawn because you're dead in a ditch somewhere – again – after some spawn-camping tool took advantage of lousy spawn logic - again. The unlocks for each class (most of which, like combat scopes, are repeated across classes) are limited in number, but the maps and modes are varied, the gameplay has a brilliant sense of urgency to it and it's just fun. Or it would be fun, if that guy inside that bush didn't think that pointing and clicking while simultaneously sipping the chocolate milk his mom made him is an impressive show of skill. Loser.

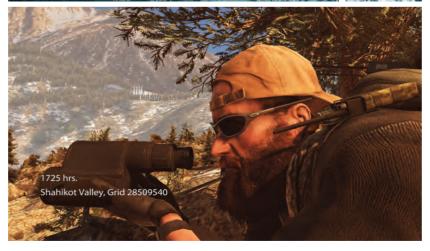












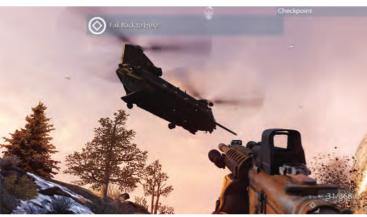
a US Army Ranger named Dante Adams. Apart from a brief segment that casts you briefly as a fourth character (the gunner of an Apache gunship); those are your three playable characters.

One of the game's problems is the lack of direction and purpose in what you're doing, as I alluded to briefly in the paragraphs above. This is a game without a definitive overarching goal. There are no outrageous global conspiracies driving the story. *MoH* has no Imran Zakhaev, no Vladimir Makarov. No twists, no turns, no prolific bad guy who's got the world in an uproar over his hatred of cute 'n fluffy critters. All this game has is the Afghanistan war and the soldiers who fight it. This lack of direction permeates through the entire game and hurts people's perception of it in a number of ways. It shouldn't though, because what people seem to be missing is that Medal of Honor doesn't focus on the war itself. Its focus is

squarely on the soldiers, and in that respect it achieves its goal wonderfully.

The characters are never really fleshed out or developed in the game. You get glimpses of your companions' personalities, but that's all. Still, I found myself subconsciously growing attached to them and their plight. You gradually understand why these characters form this brotherly bond as you see the sort of situations they're thrust into and have to rely on each other to get out of. There are so many subtle happenings in the game that make no sense until you step back and think about them. You're shown a General, sitting in a cushy chair in a cushy office somewhere in the States, dishing out orders to the men on the ground thousands of miles away, with no care for the consequences and no idea as to the real nature of things. You're shown a rabbit's foot, presumably a lucky charm that Rabbit carries around with him at all times. Things





like this are never explained in the campaign, because they don't **need** an explanation. You gradually start connecting the dots as you go though, even if you don't realise it. The game aims to highlight the perils

involved with being a modern-day warrior and the sacrifices that are made to overcome them. Senior army personnel make asinine decisions that affect thousands of lives. Friends are lost. Orders are handed down that they may not understand, but they follow them anyway because that's what they've been told to do. Oh, and that mysterious rabbit's foot? It holds more weight than any forced explanation ever could. Something as human as holding onto a lucky charm in the belief that it'll keep him safe makes you subconsciously realise that Rabbit could be a real person. He could be somebody's brother. He could be somebody's son. He's fighting for what he believes in, protecting that which he loves, no matter what the motives behind the war may be.

Just to be clear, I have no love for war outside of the virtual realm. I have absolutely no desire to be a soldier (too busy playing games, you see), but I sure as hell respect them and their sacrifices much, much more after completing MoH. That makes the furore that erupted within the sensationalistic mainstream media; the US army and all those other people who'll never play the

game but will bitch about it anyway seem even more idiotic. For all their outrage at the game's subject matter, it turns out that it's handled with such reverence and decorum that it's a more potent sign of respect for the soldiers who sacrifice so much, the heroes who arise in troubled times, than their needless anger and misled fury could ever be.

The campaign's definitely got its problems. Your Al companions, for example, always seem to be having far more fun than you. You're sort of that tagalong guy who's only there because the other guys were forced to allow you to be. While everyone else is clambering their way onto high walls with ease, you're just this loser that they have to turn around and help up the very same wall (they call it "buddy boosting"). You're shown all these cool toys and badass moves, but you don't really ever add anything other than the occasional knifing, or maybe you'll mark some targets for an airstrike. When it comes down to it, your companions could get along just fine without you. It's a minor annoyance though and the gameplay remains fun and frenetic regardless.

The visuals and audio add to the atmosphere greatly, particularly the superbly subtle musical score, which expertly crescendos just as engagements reach their climax, then slowly fades. The Unreal Engine 3-powered visuals make Afghanistan look as pretty as UE3 can make it. The single player is tense, polished and meaningful. Before you write the campaign off as a waste, give it a go for yourself and try to appreciate Danger Close's intention for it. It's frustratingly short, weighing in at a paltry four hours or so, but the ride is well worth it. NAG

**Dane Remendes** 







#### >Plus

- + Excellent single player
- + Good visuals and audio
- + Some great, manly beards

#### >Minus

- Seriously short campaign
- Unbalanced multiplayer

#### >Bottom Line

The unbalanced multiplayer can be incredibly frustrating, but the thoroughly enjoyable single player makes up for it. Pity it's so short, though



Look Listen









# Fable III

The king has returned

**GENRE** > Action RPG

**360** PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

**FABLE WAS A SERIES** of games that stood out against the hardcore RPGs, blood-soaked hack-n-slashes and super-cute JRPGs with which it shared a genre. But claiming that Fable III is a role-playing game is like calling Borderlands an adventure game - sure, it contains adventure elements, but that's not the core of the gameplay. Here, Fable III straddles the line between RPG and simulation, teetering drunkenly from side to side as the game progresses and, since it's blind drunk on grain alcohol, doesn't really pay either side enough attention. It's probably sleeping with the secretary as well.

Fable III is disappointing; let's get that out of the way right now. It's disappointing because it could have been so much better; because it's filled with poor design decisions and doesn't deliver a solid, cohesive experience that makes you want to play. Having said that, what it does deliver is quite fun on a surface level: it'll appeal to your requirements that a game be entertaining, filled with bright colours and feature about a billion side quests, and if that's where your requirements end, then you'll probably love Fable III just as much as you loved the previous two games.

The game begins with your character, either a male or female, as the sibling of the evil ruler of Albion. It's made clear that you're the offspring of the previous hero who saved Albion, but your brother is mucking things up. It's up to you to once-again save Albion, which you'll do by

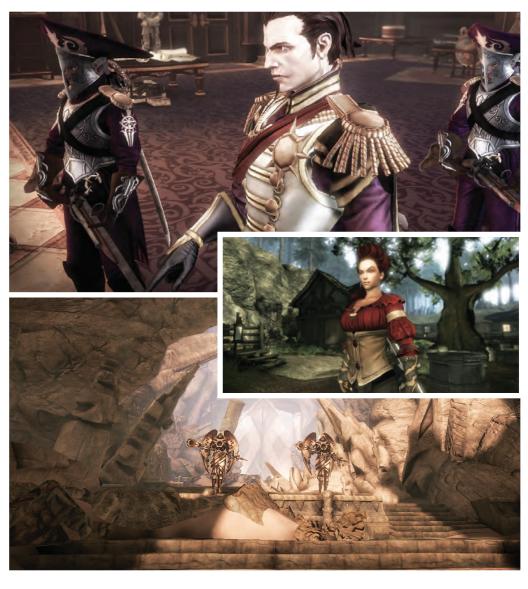


gaining the support of rebellious faction leaders around the kingdom. The main quests are by far the best part of the weak storyline, and while they follow the same outlines as the side quests (fetch, escort, protect, etc.), they're made interesting because, unlike everything else in the game, it actually feels like you're doing something meaningful. The game peaks at the end of the first half, when it takes a dark, serious twist and suddenly has a strong narrative, emotional character interaction and a lot of heart. Sadly, that sequence is short-lived, but it's nice to know just how strong the storytelling could have been.

Since much of the game revolves around combat, it's rather a good thing that the combat is fun. It's also incredibly simple, but that works to the game's advantage because you'll spend a lot of time fighting the same few groups of enemies. In this regard, little has changed from Fable II, but the RPG mechanics used to improve your character's combat abilities are distilled down to three categories: melee (swords







or hammers), ranged (pistols or rifles) and magic, each with five levels of power. To gain more power in each category, your character is thrust into the Road to Rule – a representation of your progress to revolution, broken into chapters and dotted with chests that contain new abilities for your character. These abilities range from social gestures to unlocking new gameplay elements like family life or business ownership. Each chest requires Guild Seals, essentially experience points, to unlock. Earning enough Guild Seals to unlock everything will be a challenge, but completing plenty of side quests and paying a few courtesies to the Albion populace should grant you enough to seldom feel conflicted in choice.

A few other elements of the game have been given a makeover; most notable is the Sanctuary, which replaces the age-old character screen. By pressing Start, you'll be (almost) instantly transported to a group of rooms where Jasper, your faithful butler as voiced by John Cleese, awaits to help you with the customisation of your character and the management of your daily life and finances. In the centre of Sanctuary lies a map of Albion which operates as both your quest log and real estate management system. It gives you a simplified 3D representation of each area and allows you to quickly manage your purchased property or acquire new

ones. It's a great system, and one that we hope will make its way into more RPGs. The only downside is once you own dozens of properties; it soon becomes noticeably cumbersome, and should rather have been replaced by a more advanced system.

When you're not busying yourself with affairs of the state or leading a rebellion, there are many side quests and hidden treasures for you to complete and find. All of the previous Fable mainstays make a return: silver keys, demon doors, hidden chests and dig spots, and there are loads more hidden items all over Albion. The side quests are abundant, easily outweighing the main storyline in scope and game time, which will make Fable III a favourite for achievement hunters and completionists alike. This is where Fable III manages to shine, as the trivial things like rescuing chickens from a pie factory or raising a family almost make up for every downfall this game has. Ultimately, it comes down to your preferences and what you look for in a game. If you've been desperately awaiting this game and love to sink countless hours into trifling matters, then Fable III could be considered the best of the series, but if you expect a good story, solid RPG mechanics and a game that makes your decisions feel meaningful, then you're going to feel let down. NAG

**Geoff Burrows** 

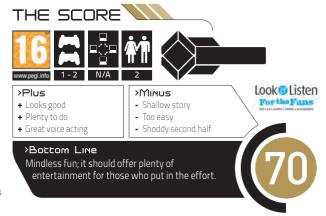
#### A tale of woe and boredom

If you're incredibly sensitive to spoilers that could ruin your virgin interaction with a game, don't read the text contained in this box out. If you'd like to know just how boring, repetitive and frustrating Fable III can get, then let's slip into this quiet alleyway together...

About halfway through the game, your character will rise to power and usurp the throne. You should know this already crazy ol' Peter Molyneux has been going on about this as a total twist of gameplay right from the beginning of the Neux-powered hype machine he's so very famous for. As simulation junkies, we had grand images of Sim City-like management screens, colourful charts and exciting royal lists. Sadly, that's far from the case.

Here's what is involved in running the affairs of Albion: because of reasons not worth spoiling your experience over, you have a year to run the kingdom. In that year, you need to accrue enough gold to safeguard Albion from impending doom – 6.5 million gold pieces to be exact. You have two ways to gather this amount of money; earn it, or pass laws that either drain or fill the royal treasuring. The former is straight-forward enough: complete quests and/or play the real-estate game to bring in the big bucks. The latter is a series of "moral decisions" that involve you listening to two opposing parties prattle on about the good of the land and the promises you made on your rise to power. Essentially, the "good" choice costs money, and the "evil" one will generate cash. A nice little conundrum, no doubt – is it worth potentially sacrificing the future of the kingdom to keep your promises and give people what they want in the interim? But the reality is that it boils down to a series of boring choices, number balancing and a couple of moderately exciting quests. Also, there's a massive loophole in the way this section of the game is designed, which means that you can easily save the day, keep your promises and walk around with fat pockets if you're willing to leave your machine running for hours on end. I'll leave it up to your imagination to figure out what I mean.

Thankfully, you still have access to the Road to Rule and all the side-quests that populate the world of Albion while you are its ruler. While the entire second "half" of the game could be completed in about an hour, stretching it out is entirely possible if you put in the effort to go hunting for entertainment.











Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

"That's no moon."

**GENRE** > Action/Adventure

**360 PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

**N WHAT IS TRULY** the most mammoth action game of the year, a reboot of the Castlevania name steps up to bring one of gaming's oldest franchises to consoles in its first full entry since the PlayStation 2.

This is a new deal; the vintage Castlevania timeline is nowhere to be found. Instead, a new origin for the Belmont lineage of vampire hunters is told through the stupidly-huge frame of Gabriel - tall, dark, and 'broodilicious', on a lonely Shadow of the *Colossus*-esque quest to resurrect a dead woman at any cost. Some may be unable to see past the departure of series lore. Do so though, and you may find a new mythology which is not inconsequential, bearing much of the gothic, oppressive structure that has always characterized Castlevania as timeless "dreadful adventure".

#### DREADFUL ADVENTURE

Lords of Shadow marks an unlikely collaboration between Hideo Kojima (he of the Solid Snaking and nano-machines) and European developer MercuryStream (they of the Clive Barker's Jericho). This third-person action-adventure title bears the blemishes of a developer sweating their first turn in the money seat. To get the brutal honesty out of the way first, there are moments in Lords of Shadow when I experienced post-traumatic flashbacks to the PlayStation 1 era of proto-3D game mechanics.

Balancing whip-em-up combat with elaborate, Uncharted style puzzleplatforming, there are many moments when the physics of MercurySteam's technology feel ill-suited to one or the other discipline. Outright neophyte errors can be found where bounding boxes are turned off on too-small platforms, and Gabriel Belmont numbly slides off the edge to an instant death - unable to grab the edge and save himself, despite automatic ledge grappling being a staple of other platforming sequences in the game.

If this sounds awful, well, frankly it is, and in a game of ordinary length by this generation's standards, such unpolished sequences would mar the whole experience. But this is no ordinary game; Lords of Shadow is **stupid** huge. Compromising 12 chapters with multiple stages in each, this campaign requires at least 16 hours for minimal completion - that's with zero backtracking. The story covers three entirely different locals, the traditional haunted castle just one of them. Being so big, the terrible, controller-throwing sequences are far between, even though they're pretty rotten when you get to them.

#### LIGHT MAGIC

Therein lies the rub. The developers get more right than they get wrong, if only by sheer statistical brute force. The combat system shines. Requiring more precise timing and outright skill than God of War, but never quite approaching the "devote your life" level of Ninja Gaiden or Bayonetta, it is streamlined and packed with interesting tactics, and enemies smart enough to require their use. Flinging his chain whip, Gabriel does feel more like a classic Belmont than many lead protagonists in some of the more ostensibly traditional Castlevania games, his visceral ass-kicking is impressive.

And Lords of Shadow is more traditional in less obvious ways. Experience is gained from defeating enemies and solving puzzles, and





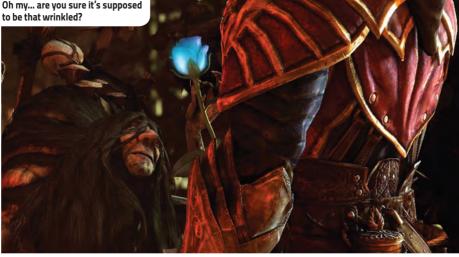
#### Kratos' Lament

The sheer popularity of God of War may lead gamers to assume third-person action heroes with a flail-like device are Kratos rip-offs. But in the case of Lords of Shadow it's the other way around. God of War was predated two years by Castlevania: Lament of Innocence on PS2... which GoW creator David Jaffee cited as his influence. Lords of Shadow's gameplay pays homage to Lament of Innocence more than one would think at first glance, and while farming enemy essence is more Devil May Cry and God of War, the rest is an evolution of the Japanese-designed Lament.













new combat moves can be purchased. But the focus is on always moving forward. The chapter-based story is used to great effect to control pacing; there's fantastic variety between combat, traversal, and story stages, and nothing ever overstays its welcome. Boss encounters run the gamut too, from human-sized duels to the now standard fifty story mega-monster who is his own entire level. Completing a stage within a chapter unlocks a special trial for having another go at it; there's always a reward for doing so, but you never have to stop.

#### DARK MAGIC

Tying it together is a robust soundtrack, but surely a controversial choice; most of the traditional gothic-jazz of Castlevania is nowhere to be heard. While there is a very strong and memorable personal theme for Gabriel Belmont, the score stays firmly orchestral and ambient in most places, save a few small but appreciated Easter-eggs.

As well, this is an extremely pretty game. "Concept art come to life" can be stated with a straight face. Effects are piled on heavily, drenching each region of the adventure in a specific mood. Enemies are modelled and animated well above average and there's a large bestiary to boot. This all comes at a price; the frame rate in Lords of Shadow is not quite up to snuff for a game this far into our generation. Again, it's a polish problem; holding about thirty frames-per-second most of the time, and rarely a problem during combat sequences, the frame rate takes a nosedive in many of the most picturesque locations.

A more pensive question though: is it

Castlevania? Yes and no; else it wouldn't be a reboot and a restart. The ethos evokes the 8-bit origins of the series in a number of ways, and while this may sound like the world's biggest cop-out, it depends on what Castlevania means to you. But it brings back memories of many of the epic adventure games of the PlayStation 2 era; meaty things, focused on a single-player experience meant to last a long time. Without such a game to throw our current era into sharp relief, it's hard to see how the push for multiplayer in everything and the problems of spiralling budgets coupled with a lack of development time have lowered our expectations. It's hard to say if that's enough for the consistency issues here to be overcome. I say yes. Just bear in mind what you're getting into before putting cash down. NAG

Miktar Dracon

#### THE SCORE











#### >Plus

- + Epic in scope
- + Lots of content
- + Incredible story

#### >Minus

- Buggy and inconsistent
- Frame rate issues





An unprecedented game, flawed yet fantastic in every way.











Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

I've got a bad feeling about this...

**GENRE** > Action

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

MAY HAVE GOTTEN A little overexcited for Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II in recent months. You can't blame me: there were trailers with giant beasties eating rancors which were the original giant beasties. Another trailer showed protagonist Starkiller (his real name is Galen Marek, in case you're wondering) effortlessly Force-bashing Darth Vader through many, many walls. Actually, all it took was the fact that there are lightsabers (dual lightsabers – even better) and TIE fighters and Yoda and the Force and so much glorious Star Wars goodness here. I also loved the hell out of the first game. It didn't help that when Michael came back from London after having seen some preview code of the sequel, he was genuinely impressed. So, with much delight I shoved that disc into my Xbox, giant, goofy grin on my face, and started slaughtering thousands of Stormtroopers. Five minutes into the game, things started feeling a little... off. Something was very, very wrong here.

Let's back up to the beginning. One of the greatest aspects of the first game was its story, which is now considered Star Wars canon. If you haven't played the first game, DO NOT READ any of the stuff encased within the lovely spoiler tags below if you plan to complete the original title before playing this sequel.

#### [SPOILERS!]

TFU II runs with the first game's Light Side ending to kick off its story. That means that Starkiller had his guts painfully replaced with a pulsating lightsaber, effectively serving as a martyr that gave rise to a group of



freedom fighters calling themselves the Rebel Alliance. Yeah, you may have heard of them. They're kind of important to the whole Star Wars lore thing. TFU II starts off with Starkiller (the disgruntled former secret apprentice) and Darth Vader (the token black guy) reunited on the planet Kamino – renowned for its clandestine cloning facilities, awesome nightclubs and fantastic weather. Vader tells this new/old apprentice that he is a clone (which may or may not be true) of the original Starkiller, who may or may not be dead. This confuses clone/not clone Starkiller, because he has all these memories of cool stuff that happened in the first game's excellent story. Memories of Juno Eclipse (the love interest), in particular, haunt Starkiller to no end and so, in a stunning display of sudden, unbridled power, could-be-Starkiller bitch slaps Vader and hightails it out of there. He wants his woman, see, and ain't no dudes with heavy, robotic breathing gonna get in his way. Thus

begins *TFU II.* [/SPOILERS!]

Okay, it's safe to continue reading now. All you really need to know now that the spoilers are out of the way is that the story is where things start going awry for TFU II. It's nowhere near as compelling as that of the original. It reaches a stage where the story feels so forced and uninspired that you can't help but wonder if the developers were so preoccupied trying to cram as many situations where Starkiller lifts heavy objects with the Force into the game that they forgot to actually give you a reason to keep lifting heavy objects.

That leads to another problem. See, there were these critics who reviewed the first game and complained that Starkiller wasn't powerful enough. They whined about something along the lines of: "The Force Unleashed? More like The Force Totally Leashed am I right?" It seems that the developers may have put too much worth in the words of jaded, cynical idiots with nothing better to do than whine about the games they claim to love. As a result, Starkiller has become what can only be











described as the lovechild of an unlikely tryst between Anakin Skywalker and Yoda where Vader's former self gleefully fulfilled all his green-midget fantasies while Yoda blurted out backwards dirty talk using his special brand of grammar. Undisclosed gestation period later, out popped Starkiller, who may or may not be 100-percent midichlorian.

We've seen some impressive Forcepowered displays in the Star Wars universe before, but Starkiller is something else this time around. This guy swats TIE fighters out of the sky with ease. He tosses entire Corellian transport ships around like they're made of Styrofoam at one point. I mean, it's cool and all, but soon all this ridiculous power starts feeling out of place. We forgave Starkiller's impressive penchant for wrangling Star Destroyers in the first game because it managed to fit in with the rest of the story. Here it feels like the developers were so busy trying to display Starkiller's impressive abilities that they forgot to ensure that the story successfully integrates with the mythos.

All this power has a side effect: the game is never really challenging. Aside from a couple of segments that are more infuriating than they are difficult, you never really feel like you're in any danger of dying. Even the main boss battles become a boring and repetitive grind because they're not that difficult – just annoyingly drawn out to give the illusion that they're epic. There's an "Unleashed" difficulty setting that can be unlocked, but even that isn't particularly taxing. Thankfully wading through the paltry number of levels with such ease is made pleasant by the smooth, responsive combat system, which makes landing combos and quickly accessing Force powers simple and elegant. The AI, on the other hand, is neither smooth nor responsive and has an alarming disregard for its own safety. Charging up to the badass who just killed a huge, spider-like droid thing with its own limbs is something that I'm pretty sure even the most poorly trained Stormtrooper knows to avoid, but that's not the case here.

Very few enemy types, recycled levels and the lack of difficulty all come together to make for a game that becomes very repetitive, very quickly. At least the level design is decent (even with all the reused assets) and the game is technologically very impressive, especially in terms of visuals. All the familiar *Star Wars* tunes are there and the audio is mostly excellent, but it's the visuals – the way your lightsaber fizzles and radiates wavy smoke in the rain, the environment's reflection of your Force Lightning, that kind of thing – that prove most immersive here. The animation is fantastic and everything looks sounds and feels very Star Wars.

I'm not sure what went wrong with this game. To be fair, despite my frustration at some of the game's annoying characteristics, I still had fun playing it and at least at the end the story kinda, sorta picks up. It's terribly short though, weighing in at less than six hours depending on the difficulty setting, with only a handful of challenge arenas to keep you busy thereafter. If it weren't for the disappointing story and if it didn't feel like the developers lost their way somewhere down the line, this game had the potential to be great. In its current form, however, I can't see fans of the first game being anything but annoyed at the missed opportunity here.

But hey: at least Guybrush Threepwood's in it. NAG

**Dane Remendes** 



#### >Plus

- Good combat system
- Fantastic visuals
- Guybrush Threepwood

#### >Minus

- Stupid Al
- Really repetitive
- Story falls short

#### >Bottom Line

It's fun for a while, but it soon becomes tedious. You should play the first game instead: the Force is stronger in that one.



Look@Listen





## F1 2010

Formula One at its finest

**GENRE** > Racing Simulator

**360 PS3** WII PS2 PSP DS

THERE ARE FEWER GAINING BELLES AND AS wide an appeal as racing games. Be it HERE ARE FEWER GAMING genres with super bikes, karts, street racers or exotics. At some point or another most gamers have come across a F1 car in a game (like in the Gran Turismo series for example) which most likely means they've been disappointed by it at some level.

F1 is undoubtedly the pinnacle of the motor racing world (despite what some proponents of a motoring discipline where cars continuously turn left, would like to believe) and no other series is as prestigious, as well watched or most importantly, as contested. In short, F1 is the Spanish football league of the motoring world. While most of us will never experience the thrill of being in an F1 car, let alone piloting it, Codemaster's F1 2010 is about as close we are ever going to get to the real deal.

With the plethora of racing games available today, mostly arcade racers and some simulators, games that cater to F1 fans are far and even fewer. Codemaster's previous F1 effort on the Wii (F1 2009) was lamentable to say the least, but instead of casting doubt on the developer with F1 2010, the game still generated hype and eager anticipation.

Fortunately, F1 2010 has not only lived up to expectations, but in some areas exceeded them. Sometimes it doesn't capture the sport authentically; however Codemasters has made a valiant and genuine effort that easily makes this the best F1 title to date.

The game follows the F1 2010 calendar,

features all the current drivers and all the tracks. (Including Korea which made its F1 track debut in late October) Each car is fantastically modelled and detailed thanks to the EGO 1.5 engine which has been specially tuned and enhanced for this game. Featuring what Codemasters calls, "the most complicated weather system ever seen in a racing game", which true to their claim is nothing short of incredible. Racing weekends can start out dry and sunny, and end up dark with significant amounts of rain. The lighting also changes accordingly which can sometimes serve as a warning to attentive drivers about impending wet conditions.

. This weather system is not only visual but key to racing strategies and can be the difference between a comfortable win and a "complete wash" of a race. The rain doesn't fall uniformly on a track and not in the same volume either, so thoughtful strategizing and even more attentive driving is what one will need. Change to intermediate tires too quickly and they will not last more than a couple of laps, losing time on the track and in the pits. Stay on the prime or even worse, the option tyre in rainy weather and an intimate relationship between you and the barrier is a guarantee.

Unlike some racers that sell as arcade racers but are at heart simulators, F1 2010 doesn't bore the player with having to learn which upgrades should be researched and how they should be applied. Instead you can quickly pick the car setup that you feel most comfortable with and get onto the track. Should you be a purist however, you can change and adjust just about every element of your car, from ballast balance, to suspension height, gear ratios, front



















wing angle and just about anything else you would care to tweak.

This level of customisation is also carried into the game mechanics, where at its most basic; F1 2010 can drive as easily as Mario Kart. Fun for novices but is completely devoid of reward for the more serious player. At the opposite end is the most realistic expert setting, where there is no ABS or Traction control (both of which were previously allowed in past F1 seasons, but are banned this season) which can be unplayable to everyone but the most dedicated and exceptionally skilled drivers.

The right balance is really somewhere in between and this is where the game comes into its own. Racing a full racing weekend with as much as seven different sessions combined and spanning more than five hours can be daunting and downright frustrating. However this is where your entire R&D takes place and achieving certain goals allows you access to upgrades faster than your team mate who plays a relatively important role in your career.

Your team mate is your main rival and beating them at every possible turn will quickly make you the team's number one driver. More than just the title of being the principal driver, having earned this position allows you to determine the team's engineering focus into what suits you and your driving style. Having said that, this element of the game isn't something you can really focus on simply because placing ahead of your team mate will make you the team's number one driver inevitably.

This unfortunately is much like the interview system that the game has after races or qualifying sessions. You get some very generic cardboard cut-out answers

to pick from and at no point do you find yourself troubled in how you answer to the team's favour. It can be fun for a little while then just becomes tedious and repetitive. Hopefully the next title can expand on this and make it more engaging.

Your Team for the most part is really just made up of your race engineer as you'll be hearing him more than anyone else which isn't necessarily always a good thing. Simply because he can be very annoying, providing incorrect information about the distance between you and your rivals and insisting that your Force India car can outbreak Lewis Hamilton in a McLaren and such things.

F1 2010 isn't a perfect game, but it's closer than any other racing title has ever come to capturing the excitement and exhilaration of F1 motorsport. The visuals are fantastic, the physics superb and the weather system incredible. F1 2010 is without question the racing simulator of the year. NAG

Neo Sibeko

#### THE SCORE













#### >Plus

- Superb car physics
- + Incredible weather system
- + Stunning visuals

#### >Minus

Ouestionable race enginee

 Lame media interaction svstem

#### >Bottom Line

The best F1 racing simulator for any platform to date, a must have for racing enthusiasts.



Look Listen













# **WRC: FIA World Rally Championship**

Milestone's new rally title tries to dish some dirt

**GENRE** > Racing

**360 PS3** WII PS2

T'S BEEN FIVE YEARS since the release of the last game to bear the license of the World Rally Championship, and in the intervening time, the rally genre has been dominated by Codemasters' DiRT franchise. The DiRT games are renowned for offering the white-knuckle thrills of off-road racing whilst not being so overly complicated as to become inaccessible to mainstream gamers. The latest WRC release from developers Milestone (of SBK and Moto-GP fame) is targeted more at the rally enthusiast, offering greater depth and realism than its competitors. Though the game is plagued by its share of flaws, it's a reasonable first attempt by the Italian development studio. It may not have done quite enough to wrest the videogame rally championship from Codemasters, but it's a promising revitalisation of the WRC series.

Offering a spread of vehicles from the WRC championship class, as well as three support classes, and a selection of 78 realworld tracks, WRC isn't lacking in content. The game's career mode, titled "Road to WRC", sees you start off in the J-WRC class, gradually unlocking new tiers of events and vehicles until you're given the chance to compete for a real WRC team. Although you'll have to spend a fair amount of time slogging through races in the relatively underpowered cars that are initially available, this allows you to gradually become accustomed to the game's physics and damage models before unleashing the fury of a fully-fledged WRC vehicle on the unsuspecting gravel.

As for the racing itself, WRC can become fairly unforgiving. As with the real-world



Milestone. It offers a more realistic (and less forgiving experience) than its nearest competitor, DiRT 2, but it also lacks the latter's element of polish. Hardcore rally enthusiasts are likely to find some enjoyment from WRC, but in a world dominated by DiRT and Gran Turismo, this series still has some growing up to do. NAG

Adam Liebman

sport, even the slightest mistake on the track can seriously dent your times (or your car),

balance for your skill level. In spite of the realistic handling, there are areas where WRC falls painfully short. Throughout the game, you'll be competing alone on the track – your time is compared to that of the AI drivers to determine where you placed. At most, you're able to race against a ghost car in some modes (including the online modes), so those looking for the same kind of multi-car action as in DiRT2 will be disappointed. The game also suffers from an unwieldy and unfriendly interface, and load times so lengthy as to border on the obscene. The in-game visuals are a mixed bag; although car models are beautifully detailed, the tracks themselves and trackside scenery are bland and unconvincing, even at speed.

meaning that later events have the potential

to become frustrating. Fortunately, there are

a variety of driver-assist options available to

help with steering, traction control and even

individually, allowing you to strike the perfect

braking. These can be switched on and off

Ultimately, WRC represents a respectable first entry into the genre for developers









#### >Plus

- + Challenging, realistic racing
- + Plenty variety

#### >Minus

- Disappointing visuals
- No multi-car races
- Cumbersome interface

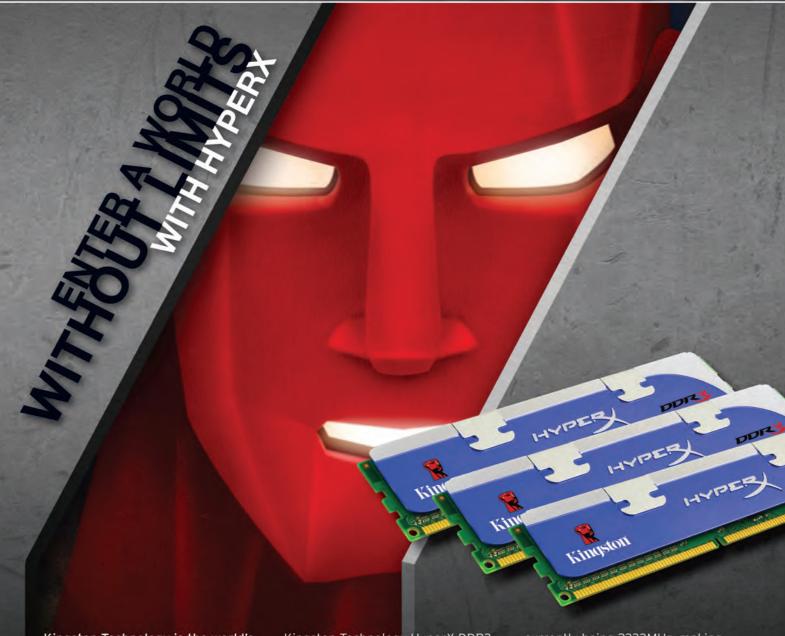
#### >Bottom Line

Promising game, offering a realistic and challenging rally experience that's sadly hampered by nagging flaws and disappointing graphics.



Look Listen





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**EA Sports MMA** 

No submission from the competition just yet...

**GENRE** > Sport Simulator

**360 PS3** WII PS2 PSP

IXED MARTIAL ARTS ARE sweeping the globe, both as a way to learn selfdefence and keep fit and as a sport. In fact, competitions in events arranged by leagues like UFC and Strikeforce drawn big crowds, with more fans and adherents taking to watching the sport (or competing in it) every day. As a sport, it's a pretty brutal affair, although it doesn't quite come down to noholds-barred fighting. Still, one would have to think carefully about getting involved in such a sport – which is where simulations come in handy.

Seeing as the sport is new, the simulations are pretty new to the market as well. We have seen a few titles from THQ's UFC Undisputed franchise, but not a lot else.

Naturally, the popularity of the sport makes it a viable option for games based on it, and one that Electronic Arts wouldn't ignore for too long. In fact, it's a bit surprising that the company who holds the majority of popular, licensed sports franchises would take as long as they did in producing a game

As the more prominent UFC license is held by THQ, EA went with Strikeforce for this title. They have included the voices and likenesses of numerous well known MMA competitors (including the very amusing Bas Rutten) as coaches and advisors in the game.

The idea is simple. The player starts a career as an MMA fighter, and progresses through it to take as many titles as possible. Through the length of the career, the player will have opportunities to train with virtual versions of MMA greats, even learning new signature moves. It's a lot like Fight Night

with kicks and grappling.

In fact, the Fight Night feel is undeniable in this game. It uses the latest Fight Night engine, (which means more realistic physics, sweat and good graphics), and also uses a control scheme that Fight Night players would recognise instantly. See, where THQ's titles make use of complex button combinations (giving the player more variety, arguably, but also much more complexity) MMA makes use of the right analogue stick to throw punches. Hold down one modifier (one of the shoulder buttons) and the punches become kicks. Another modifier makes them body blows... and holding down both together means that the player will be aiming kicks at his opponent's body. It's dead simple, really, and it works well.

Grappling and take-downs rely on the face buttons, but before you start thinking "button-masher", the game makes use of a highly effective stamina system that eliminates the dominance of merely hammering buttons until you win. Stamina needs to be effectively managed, or the player won't stand a chance.

As a first release in a new franchise, this game is great. It needs a bit of work here and there, particularly in terms of online multiplayer options and some AI behaviour. For the most part, though, it's solid, and speaks of great things to come from this new EA franchise. NAG

**Walt Pretorius** 

THE SCORE











>Plus

- + Easy to play
- + Good looking

#### >Minus

- Online options could be
- Some Al issues

#### >Bottom Line

A great start to a new franchise, this one makes a lot of promises for future MMA outings from EA.







# **GET THEM ON BLU-RAY™AND DVD**









# The Sims 3

They're everywhere!

**GENRE** > Life Simulation

360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

HE SIMS FRANCHISE HAS been a phenomenon since it first appeared more than ten years ago. There's just something very alluring about the little computer people that the player gets to control in these games. The Sims 3 took that a few steps further for PC gamers, introducing some new ideas to the overall concept and, as was expected even before it launched, the latest PC iteration is fantastically popular.

But the Sims has almost always been traditionally PC-bound. There were a few Sims titles that came out for consoles before, but they never had the impact that the PC series did. Now, with the release of The Sims 3 for consoles, EA hopes to break that trend, introducing a whole bunch of new gamers to the delights of the Sims and their quirky ways.

The more powerful console hardware that is on the market has, in part, made this possible. The Sims we see on console now are much closer to their PC counterparts, making the game a lot more attractive in many ways (not just visually).

The premise is exactly the same as it is on PC: the player either creates or chooses an existing family of Sims, and then runs their lives. Everything from when they eat and sleep to relieving themselves is in the player's hands. Naturally, they have the right kind of AI to look after themselves, but they won't do it as effectively as when the player handles matters.

The Sims 3 on consoles is not a carbon copy of the PC version – there is no way it could be. Many of the complexities of the PC game have been either simplified or removed There are a lot of surprised people in the Sims.

for the console version, and the controls have been heavily modified to make up for the lack of a mouse and keyboard. Still, the controls are effective, and easy to learn. People that have played the PC version may well find the controls a bit slow and possibly even frustrating, but they still effectively allow the user to interface with the game.

One addition that is lots of fun is Karma Powers. These powers allow the user to make good (or bad) things happen to their Sims, effectively allowing them to mess with their virtual families, should they have earned enough Karma Points. These points are earned by making the Sims' wishes come true, much like Rewards and Achievements in the PC version.

It's a good start on console for The Sims 3, and one that is likely to see a lot of support from EA (probably in the form of downloadable content.) There are a few issues, though - like lots of loading time. Also, the town just doesn't feel as big as it does on the PC, particularly because it is broken into smaller 'cells' to make running the game a bit more manageable for the hardware.

Ultimately, it's a great title for those who

have never played *The Sims 3* on PC. PC players may well not like the slower approach and the different control scheme overly much, and the apparent sparseness of the title does not really contend with the lively world presented on the game's native platform. Still, it's a good effort, and one that will surely gather many more fans for the franchise. NAG

**Walt Pretorius** 













 Great port + Karma Powers >Minus Limited

- Some performance issues

Look Listen

#### >Bottom Line

A great option for console gamers who have never played the *Sims 3* on <u>PC.</u>



**Shaun White Skateboarding** 

Dude, look at all the pretty colours

**GENRE** > Action / Sports

PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS 360

TSEEMS THAT THE further away from plain ol' skateboarding the developers of these titles try to take their games, the worse they get. Skateboarding games need three things to deliver a good game: solid controls, interesting level design and tons of skating culture. Shaun White Skateboarding nails the second two, but suffers from terrible controls brought on by a half-hearted attempt at dual-stick tricking and awkward, unnatural-feeling physics. It also adds in a fourth factor that I don't remember seeing on the list of requirements: making the player feel like they're in some sort of LSD-laced hippy music video.

SWS is set in a fictional city called new Harmony, where all the citizens have been "de-influenced" by evil propaganda courtesy of the super evil mega corporation called The Ministry, bro. And because, like, all corporations represent "The Man," and The Man totally hates skaters because they represent, like freedom and stuff, it's up to you, to, like, save New Harmony from The Ministry by skating at stuff. The more you skate, and the higher your influence meter rises based on how sick your tricks are, dude, then the more colour and joy you inject into the citizens of New Harmony and



the very city itself. The result of all of this might appeal to you if you too hate The Man, and feel that skating represents the future of like, democracy, bro, but for everyone else, it'll probably just get on your nerves.

The idea that frames Shaun White Skateboarding isn't a terrible one (however misguided), and it's moderately entertaining to see the bland city come to life as you do your thing all over the place, but no amount of dressing-up will convince anyone that this is anything more than a dead-average skating game with awkward controls, man. NAG

**Geoff Burrows** 











#### >Plus

- Interesting levels
- Attempts at storytelling

#### >Minus

- Poor controls
- Fails at storytelling

#### >Bottom Line

There are better skating games available. Play this only if you've run out of options



Look Listen



# StarCraft II Strategy Guide

Part 3: The Zerg

AST MONTH WE TOOK a look at the big picture with macromanagement – this month we will be zooming in on micromanagement. We will also examine Zerg in the lab... In the next and final issue, we will tackle team-play tactics, touch on some more advanced concepts, and tie up any loose ends we find.

In last issue's list of StarCraft priorities, I slotted effective unit countering between macro- and micromanagement: this is because, essentially, this element bridges the two scales. As battlefield conditions evolve, you need to respond by adjusting the mix of units you train – this is the macromanagement side of it. For example, if your opponent goes mass Stalkers and you are Zerg, you will want to emphasize Zerglings (preferably "speedlings" or "cracklings") in your army.

Once actually engaged, it becomes important to ensure that your units are

picking their correct targets – Hydralisks prioritising flying units, Roaches focusing on armoured units such as Marauders or Stalkers. This is a micromanagement issue.

You can look up specific hard-counter units, but just memorising them isn't going to give you an insight – ideally you should understand how and why a particular institution. Mutalisks, because although they can shoot air, they do so relatively slowly, their damage bonus is against armoured (while Mutas are light) units, and they tend to bunch up, allowing Muta shots to bounce around devastatingly. So throw in some Phoenixes and Sentries – the former specialise in air superiority, while the latter have the Guardian Shield ability which will considerably reduce incoming damage; some Void Rays might also help, though Marines are actually really good at shooting down Mutas while they're hovering, they can't keep up with them while they fly; so they can create "no fly" zones, but can't actually counter Mutas per se – and on top of that, they die in chunks when Muta shots bounce around Solution: a couple of Thors (good range + extra damage to light units), and some Vikings – yes, the latter do bonus damage to armoured, not light, but their mobility and fire range still make them effective.

Basically, consider as many factors as possible when choosing your counter-



type vs. armour type and relative mobility. Consider how a unit behaves on the field: so Marines tend to bunch up and have low hit-points and are often backed up by Medivacs? Infestors' Fungal Growth will hit many of them at once, root them in place so they can't get in firing range, will hurt them badly, and will force the Medivacs to deplete their energy, making them ineffective very quickly (and if you manage to hit a squad just after it activated Stimpack, you are seriously smiling!) Also, no unit exists in a vacuum – consider how combinations of units can help you counter the threat, or how other units combined with your target will affect your proposed counter.

#### T'S IN THE DETAILS

(Warning: Ridiculous car analogy imminent!) Think of macro as the main driving force – a big-ass engine that gives you speed; without one, you can forget about racing, you're just not going to cut it, no matter how state-of-the-art the rest of your car. Now think of micro as good suspension and brakes – they improve your handling, allowing you to corner better, and thus give you an edge over other cars with engines comparable

The art of micromanagement in this game is not simple to explain - it





comprises many individual skills and tricks. One of the most important, however, is "dancing". No, you won't need special shoes: what this entails is picking out a damaged unit from a group and pulling it back so that enemies target something else instead. Then the original unit can, optionally, dive back in while enemies are occupied with new targets. The most extreme examples involve soft ranged units taking on melee opponents (for example, several Marines against a couple of Zealots) – here you split up your marines and move whichever ones are being chased, switching it up when your opponent changes targets. This is actually quite tricky to do, and while you are doing this, you may be neglecting things that need doing in your base. Your opponent's best response: to micro his units in turn, targeting each zealot individually at a different marine – this puts you under simultaneously. (This is a key concept to both microing and countering your opponent's micro: look for opportunities to make his job harder than yours. The more you have for other things.)

Certain units should generally be handled separately – High Templars, for

example, or Ravens, or Infestors. "Special forces" groups should also be handled separately – a couple of Medivacs with a careful mix of drop-troops, a few Reapers, Dark Templars, a wing of Mutalisks – these are unit groups that typically want individual attention. You usually don't want to group Mutas with ground troops, as they will arrive at the target too early, and alone.

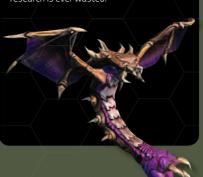
The most effective grouping places units that move at the same speed, perform the same/similar function, or work synergistically, together. Disparate units should be kept apart and managed accordingly.

While Terran and Protoss are analogues of each other, Zerg is distinct from both. Though there are definitely commonalities in broad terms (such as efficient resource usage, or the importance of scouting), in most regards the Zerg require quite a different approach.

#### UP IN YOUR FACE!

Terran is the most defence-capable race, and Protoss is also able to hold while building up, but Zerg generally can't afford to try that. It can spawn sizeable

AIR SUPREMACY
Mutalisks are fast, light units that make for excellent expansion harassment units thanks to their speed and bouncing projectile attack. They're also well-equipped for neutralising a troublesome Void Ray mass, and will be able to take care of Vikings despite the massive attack range differences. While Mutalisks will see you through right from the early to the late game, Zerg's real airborne damage-dealers come in the form of the Brood Lord. Morphed from the Corrupter, Brood Lords have the second-longest range in the game at 9.5, only just out-ranged by the Terran Thor's range of 10 units. This huge range advantage means that the Brood Lord can be used as the primary damagedealer when assaulting a base. It will need to be backed up with ground or air units that can distract or soak up damage, and its lumbering pace means that once it's committed to a fight, it either needs to win or die trying. A Brood Lord's damage payload comes in two parts: the initial impact when it flings a Broodling at its target, which can be improved by researching damage upgrades at the Spire, and the Broodling's melee damage that it performs once it's on the ground, which can be improved at the Evolution Chamber. What this means is that a Zergling and Mutalisk build flows very naturally into a late-game move to Brood Lords, as no time and resources spent on research is ever wasted.







Sneaking burrowed units around the back of bases to take out workers is a good tactic. Get scanned though and your plans will be revealed.

CREEPY-CRAWLIES
All Zerg buildings must be built on creep, and all Zerg land units move faster on creep. Terran and Protoss buildings cannot be constructed or warped-in on creep. In addition, Zerg buildings that have lost their founding creep will take damage constantly. With all of that in mind, Zerg players should realise the importance of this organic purple carpet. Creep can be laid down in four ways: Hatcheries, Queens, Overlords and Nydus Worms. Creep generated from a Hatchery is the most resistant, as its source needs to take a lot of damage before it's killed; Queens can lay Creep Tumours that not only spread creep, but are also cloaked once they have finished deploying and can create another Creep Tumour within a radius – effectively allowing for unlimited Creep Tumours from a single original source (and great scouting). Once your Hatchery is upgraded to a Lair, your Overlords gain the ability to rain down temporary creep below them. And, finally, Nydus Worms produce a small radius of creep when they deploy.

Now that you know how to spread the love, let's look at a few things you can do with creep. While Terran is known for its ability to rapidly deploy a mobile frontline with a combination of salvageable Bunkers, deployable Siege Tanks and cheap Turrets, Zerg can do one better. Both Spine Crawlers (anti-ground defences) and Spore Crawlers (anti-air) can uproot, literally walk to their desired location and plop back down into the creep. Uprooting takes one second to perform, rooting takes 12 seconds, and off creep the crawlers are painfully slow movers, but this system can be used in a number of creative ways – both offensive and defensive. You can use a handful of spare Overlords to creep a chokepoint and then waddle your defensive structures over there; you can drop an Overlord full of Drones into a remote area of your opponent's base, rain down some goo and begin construction of a few Crawlers (best bring along a couple of combat units to keep your opponent busy); or quite simply push your defensive line, with the aid of Creep Tumours and Overlords, all the way to your opponent's front door. Despite their appearance, Spine Crawlers have a range to match Photon Cannons and Marauders inside a Bunker; and Spore Crawlers provide the important ability to detect cloaked and burrowed units.



#### PICK YOUR FIGHTS

Many Zerg units have abilities not found in many units of the other two races. Burrowing, movement while burrowed, variable movement speed, the ability to spawn additional units, debilitating spells, and morphing are all examples of abilities that tend to make Zerg players more scarce than Terran or Protoss. While it's not entirely true that a Zerg player would need to make use of all of these "strange" abilities, knowing how to use a few of them will give you not only the strategic, but very often the psychological edge over a less-knowledgeable opponent. There's nothing quite like an army of Infested Terrans suddenly appearing in the back of your base to shake the confidence bestowed by your "rock-hard" defences.

Burrowing is the first of these techniques that you should learn to use effectively. Both Roaches and Infestors can move while burrowed (the former only once Tunnelling Claws has been researched), which makes them extremely useful for sneaking behind poorly-monitored enemy positions. Additionally, Infestors can use their Terran Infestation spell while burrowed – they never have to give away their position. Roaches heal at a ridiculous rate while burrowed: 5 hit points per second as standard and 10 per second once Tunnelling Claws is researched,

making their burrowing ability akin to dancing, although it requires a bit more micro-management. If you feel that you're losing a fight, and suspect that your opponent lacks detection abilities, don't be afraid to burrow your units right where they stand. Just be sure to get them out as soon as possible, and follow up with reinforcements. Zerg units cannot attack while burrowed, and will not automatically surface if they get spotted and subsequently attacked. Most Zerg units can also be set to auto-surface once burrowed, by right-clicking on the Unburrow icon. This effectively turns burrowed Banelings into mines, which can make for a nasty surprise at expansion points.











waves of units in short order, but typically has softer units and structures. Both of these factors mean that Zerg is most effective when putting pressure on the opponent. If it plays too passively, odds are that enemy assets will become too hard. Consequently, it is almost a must to do a Zergling rush of some sort early in the game. This is not to say that you should "8-pool rush" as such, and for the immediate win. What it means is that you want to disrupt (and scout) your opponent early on – if he was going for a Reaper rush, for example, he is now certainly changing gears in a hurry to survive! In the meantime, you take the opportunity to develop your own infrastructure.

PRECISIONS, PRECISIONS... While Terran and Protoss have specific production structures for each category of units, and unit production ratios are effectively auto-regulated by them, Zerg are generated at the same structure (Note: hereafter, the term "Hatchery" will be used to denote that structure or its upgraded variants, the Lair and the Hive.) This unique mechanic is both Zerg's greatest strength

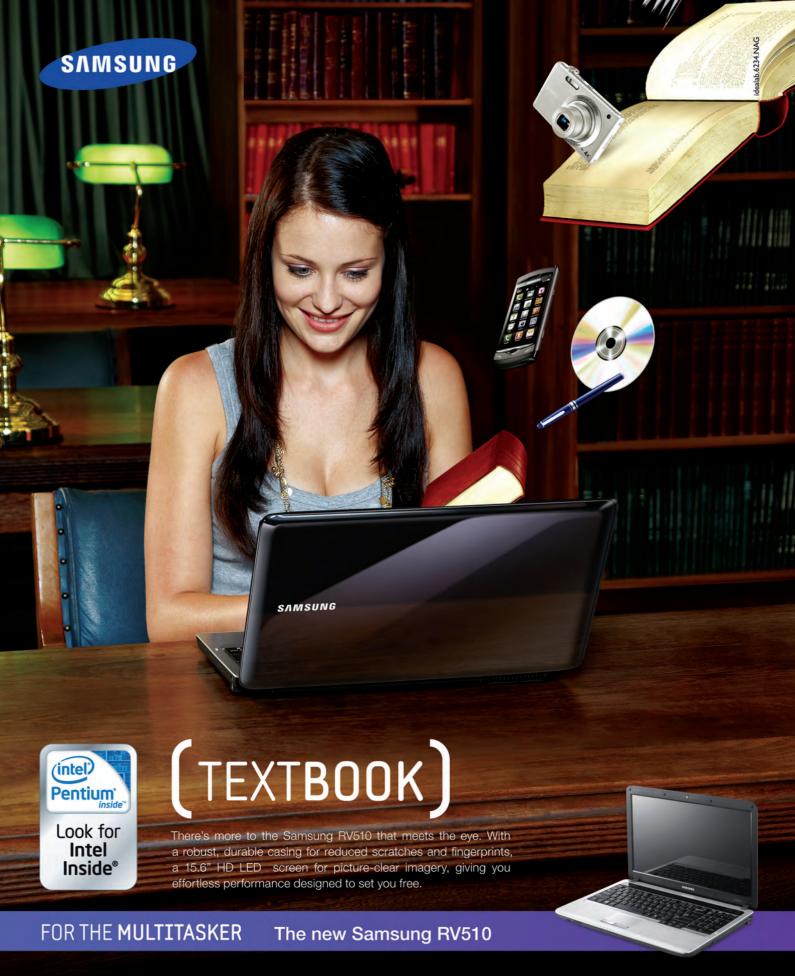
and its Achilles's heel. The advantage lies in its versatility: as long as you have one of each tech structure, any larva at any Hatchery can grow up to become whatever you want it to be. The pitfalls are two-fold: firstly, if you lose a Hatchery, you are not only losing a resource gathering point and worker production facility, you are losing a production facility, period. Second and more subtle is the lack of auto-regulation in the larva system – it can be tricky to correctly balance Drone and unit production, not to mention that Overlords also expend Larvae. It is all too easy to start pumping out combat units, at the expense of one's economy, or grow one's economy at while neglecting to train an army (very common mistake for Zerg novices!)

Beyond that, it can also be tricky to ratios, yet this is vital to succeeding as a Zerg player. Consider this: Larvae spawn at a fixed rate (and then there's the Queen's Spawn Larva ability, which is also subject to a particular rate), yet the same Larvae can turn into drones, Zerglings, Mutalisks, Ultralisks, or anything else. Obviously, a Larva that becomes an Ultralisk has been more fully used, so to speak, while one

that turns into a pair of zerglings has been conversely underused. If all you make is Zerglings, you will find your resources piling up. If all you make is Ultralisks, you will spend all your resources and have lots of idle Larvae. The former stresses production, the latter stresses economy. . The key is to find a balance. So with Zerg, in addition to making sure that you are spending all your minerals and gas, you also have to aim at spending the majority of your larvae. Why only a majority? Because it is very useful to have a modest a particular unit type in a hurry. (A couple of Void Rays approach, so you quickly order

some extra hydralisks, for example.)
While this is a challenge to get right, it organically encourages unit diversity, providing you with the widest selection of represented hard counters. Of course, it is crucial to maximise your production of Larvae, so a minimum of one Queen per want two (one Queen constantly spawning Larvae will never have any energy for anything else, such as creating creep tumours, or transfusing health). NAG

Alex Jelagin



www.samsung.com

Intel® Pentium Processor T4500 (2.3GHz, 800MHz, 1MB) • Windows® 7 Home Premium • 15.6" LED HD Display • Intel GMA 4500M Graphics

Windows®. Life without Walls™. Samsung recommends Windows 7.



## **MMO Gaming** Mouse

Gaming branded products seem to be the in-thing these days. Developed to coincide with the release of the latest World of Warcraft expansion in December, the SteelSeries World of Warcraft: Cataclysm MMO Gaming Mouse has been made to look like the armor plating of Deathwing the Destroyer. Using the software you can program all 14 buttons with more than 130 preset game commands, and create custom macros and/or use the in-game macro scripting language.



## SONY ERICSSON AND POSTNET ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP

Need to get your Sony Ericsson phone repaired or upgraded? PostNet SA stores across South Africa have now been furnished with the necessary software to be able to conduct basic software repairs and upgrades in store. For more technical repairs, handsets are sent from any PostNet store in the country to the technical experts at The Sony Ericsson Service Centre in Johannesburg via PostNet's proficient courier network. Says Sonja Shear, a spokesperson for for Sony Ericsson, "We aim to have the clients' handset back with the client within five working days and the extensive PostNet network means that the closest store will be inevitably nearby."

#### FUTUREMARK UPDATE

Futuremark has announced some changes to its website design and also the ORB database. A representative from Futuremark stated, "Futuremark is also officially ending online service support for legacy benchmarks. This means that the new service will not support 3DMark 2001 SE, 3DMark03, 3DMark05, PCMark 2002 or PCMark04. Futuremark will soon be releasing its DirectX 11 compliant benchmark called 3DMark 11.

#### Snippets

MSI's new 15" gaming laptop, the GE603, is packing an Intel Core i5 CPU with NVIDIA GeForce GT 425M GPU.

The CM Storm SF-19 is a new series of gaming notebook coolers targeted at 19-inch and larger gaming laptops. It has 4 USB 3.0 ports and two adjustable 140mm 2,600RPM turbine fans.

Intel, Samsung, and Toshiba are joining forces and pooling R&D efforts in a consortium funded in part by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry to **develop** semiconductor chips nearing 10nm by 2016.

Logitech have launched the Wireless Solar Keyboard K750 that powers itself whenever there's light. It can also work in total darkness for up to three months.

The Razer Anansi gaming keyboard has been designed for MMO gaming with over 100 programmable keys, on-the-fly macro recording, and five additional gaming keys. It can also be used with the 12-button mouse keypad on the Razer Naga and Razer Naga Epic MMO gaming mice.

ASUS recently released **new** software that will enable a hard disk drive to utilise its full capacity. If you have an ASUS motherboard, go to http://event.asus. com/mb/2010/ Disk\_Unlocker/ and download the free software utility called Disk Unlocker. The software will enable ASUS motherboards, new or old, to access the full capacity of hard drives with capacities larger than 2048GB.

#### Know Your Technology

Bump mapping: Bump mapping can be viewed as the precursor to displacement mapping however it is still used today in some instances where it is cheaper in resources than other techniques and offers similar results. Bump mapping allows more realistic rendering by applying a bump "texture". This map/texture changes the brightness of the pixels in conjunction with a corresponding height map. This interaction is governed by how light hits the surface and this is usually determined as the surface normal defined as a vector at varying pixel positions. (This will change for instance as you move an object through the scene.) Bump mapping as used by older hardware is much simplified than the above for real time rendering purposes, but the idea is exactly the same

Parallax Mapping: A much improved version of bump mapping that allows displacing of texture coordinates by altering the view angle relative to the surface normal. This also alters the value of the height map at the same point. This technique is angle dependant so the effect is kept even at steep angles. However if you had to look at wall from a "zero" angle you would see that this is a texture effect and the actual geometry remains flat. Luckily this is near impossible in most interactive environments (think how there's a limit to how close you can get to a wall in all games) and the effect is kept even at close proximity.

**Displacement mapping:** An alternative to bump, normal and parallax mapping. It is usually superior in that it supports self shadowing, occlusion and retains detail. It is computationally heavier than the others as over and above the two mashes for the texture, further processing is needed to generate the effect. Displacement mapping works at the texture level and does not alter actual geometry. In recent GPUs shaders are used to simulate what used to be the displacement map and thus offering speed and quality gains many times greater than that of using a map.

Tessellation: This is a technique where geometry can be generated by the GPU given a specific number of control points and a mesh. The level of tessellation required for any object is defined at run time according to pre-defined specifics. Tessellation is one of the corner stone's of DirecX11 and OpenGL4.x. This is a highly mathematical function yet relatively simple in hardware, yet expensive in die area for the GPU. Tessellation is in consumer graphics context the best of what all other displacement techniques offer as it alters actual geometry offering significantly better results and is an order of magnitude faster for the same quality as other techniques. Used in conjunction with texture altering techniques as described above, it can produce compelling and near off-line rendered detail to interactive scenes. This will forever be an important feature in real time renderers and the relevant graphics hardware.

#### By the Numbers

# **GF110**

According to DigiTimes, NVIDIA's next enthusiast-grade graphics processor, the GeForce GTX580, based on the new GF110 silicon, is poised for at least a paper-launch by early December. Sources in the video card industry told DigiTimes that the GTX580 is expected to be 20% faster than the existing GeForce GTX480. The new GPU is built on the existing 40nm process. NVIDIA's 28nm GPUs based on the Kepler architecture are expected to take shape only towards the end of 2011.

#### Hardware Scoring System

- Not worth reviewing so it's unlikely to ever appear in the magazine.
- Hardware turns on/installs but doesn't do much else.
- This is reserved for all products that function exactly as advertised but not well at all.
- Hardware that is worth considering if your budget is extremely tight.
- Middle of the road product. Performs and works exactly as advertised.
- Slightly above average product with additional functionality over the standard model.
- Good product that falls only a little short of being a must have item
- Reserved for products you will definitely want to go out and buy if you're in the market.
- Excellent product, near perfect.
- 10 The stuff of dreams, the best in the market, bar none.

#### Hardware Awards



This award can be given for a product that is fast, useful, great value, innovative, first of its kind, etc. It is typically only awarded to a product that scores 7 or higher.



The Dream Machine award isn't always given to the fastest version of any product, but the most versatile, powerful, etc. Only products scoring 9 or 10 get this badge.

#### The Mosh Pit



#### JOYSTICK JUNKIES HANDHELD CONSOLE BAG

Made from leather, this digital art inspired bag can store any of these consoles – DS, DS Lite, DSi, DSi XL, PSP or PSPgo. It has a detachable strap, a front pocket and a main pocket. We love it! R299.99 | www.phoenixsoftware.co.za



#### GENIUS G-SHOT D508

A 5 megapixel waterproof digital camera is all you need for your beach holiday this festive season. It can be safely immersed in 3m of water for up to 30 mins. We LOLed at the picture on the back of the box where the camera is shown in a fish tank with an orange goldfish swimming around. Why you would want to put your camera in a fishtank is beyond us, but we still think it's a super cool camera to have. **R699 | www.geniusnet.com.tw** 



#### GIGABYTE M6900 PRECISION GAMING MOUSE

More gaming peripherals from Gigabyte. The M6900 has a 3200dpi optical sensor, on-the-fly DPI switching, 5 programmable buttons, 2-way tilt wheel and 30G acceleration. This month we're highly amused by packaging statements - this one has "Gold-plated USB connector" on the front, as though that would be a consideration when buying a gaming mouse. R299 | www.rectron.co.za

#### The Dream Machine





#### "¿qué?"

Ryan sent us this letter ... "Why does the Dream Machine have a soundcard but no speakers? (Besides for the lack of space on the page) I understand you're trying to make the most expensive machine that money can buy, but having cards in there that don't get used doesn't make it any more desirable, and that sound card is going to make no difference to the average pair of Genius "speakers" people tend to get bundled with their PCs

We asked Manuel from Fawlty Towers and all we got was "I learn Eeenglieesh from a booook" and "I know nothing," so we asked Neo. He rolled his eyes, sighed just a little and then said, "A lot of people don't use PC speakers but rather opt for headphones, or output to a receiver/amp like me. However, everyone uses a sound controller be it on board or a discreet card. Speakers are optional but a sound controller isn't

Neo does have a point but so do you and yours is duly noted. We will try to source some kick ass speakers in the next few months to add to our rig.

#### The Damage...

THE Barriagem	
COMPONENT	PRICE*
CASE	R3,999
PROCESSOR	R9,799
MOTHERBOARD	R5,999
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GRAPHICS	R12,499
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DISPLAY	R4,599
KEYBOARD	R2,001
MOUSE	R899
TOTAL	R52,590

#### \* At print time

#### NOTEBOOK

Alienware M17x

R29,999 | www.dell.co.za

#### System Specs:

CPU: Intel Core i7 720QM (2.8GHz)

**RAM:** 8GB DDR3 1066

**Graphics:** 2 x ATI Mobility RADEON

HD4870 CFX **Display:** 17-inch LCD (1920x1200)

HDD: 320GB SATA2 OS: Windows 7 Ulitimate 64-bit





**PROCESSOR** Intel Core i7 980X www.intel.com



**MOTHERBOARD GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9** www.gigabyte.com



**MEMORY** Corsair Dominator GT 2000C8 www.corsair.com



**GRAPHICS ASUS ARES Limited Edition** za.asus.com



STORAGE DRIVE Seagate Barracuda XT 2TB www.seagate.com



OS DRIVE OCZ Agility 2 60GB SSD www.ocz.com



**POWFR** Thermaltake Toughpower 1.5KW www.thermaltake.com



Ikonik Ra X10 LIQUID www.ikonik.com



**KEYBOARD** Logitech G19 www.logitech.com



MOUSE Logitech G9x Laser www.logitech.com



SOUND **ASUS Xonar Xense** za.asus.com



# Tech Q&A

#### **QUESTIONS**

From: PR Moehrke

**EY NEO AND THE** rest of the NAG team. I have loads of things to ask so be patient

1. How do I get Xbox Live and what connection is better to use, 3G or Broadband ADSL? Is wireless better than using an Ethernet cable? Can you go wireless using a Broadband ADSL; it works perfectly with

2. I recently got Mass Effect 2 on PC. What an epic game that is (totally agree with Tarryn). Now this exactly what happened with the demo on the DVD, I cannot see the mouse on the screen. Looked at the EA Support part on the Mass Effect 2CD on anything about no mouse on the screen but nothing, the only way to select things is by going to control alt delete then put my mouse where I think what I select is and click there. It's not that big of a problem but it is a pain especially when trying to use the biotic powers but otherwise it does not affect the game any other way. I might not have a dream machine gaming rig but this is what I do have: Windows 7 Home Premium 32-bit, Pentium(R) Dual-Core CPU, 1024MB RAM, DirectX 11, NVIDIA GeForce 210 512MB. 3. I have been running Mass Effect 2 on 1GB

1. If wireless works with your PSP as well as you say it does, then it'll work fine with Xbox Live. ADSL will always be better than 3G, though. Xbox Live will already have launched in SA by the time you read this so go here to see all the details on how to set up and migrate an account:

RAM when on the box it says the Windows

7 version needs 2GB RAM even though it's

not slow at all. Will 2GB make a big difference

and if so how much for another gig of RAM."

#### http://www.xbox.com/en-ZA/live

2. The drivers are likely your problem and not the demo itself. Try updating your graphics

3. Depending on the RAM you have (DDR2/3) and what brand, you could pay anything between R240 and R1,200. 2GB will definitely make a huge difference, so we highly recommend it for better gaming performance.

## HDD, PC MAINTENANCE, AND LIQUID COOLING

From: Pieter

I EVERYONE AT NAG. Want to start by saying great magazine. Awesome. Love it. Anyway, back to the topic of my e-mail. I've been wondering lately whether I should upgrade my hard drive or not. At the moment, I have a Seagate 7200.12 Barracuda HDD 1TB (32mb) and was wondering what the most state-of-the-art hard drive out there is. I have however, decided that I do not want to upgrade to a SATA 3 mobo, nor do I want to buy an SSD. In other words, what I am basically looking for is the most state-ofthe-art hard drive that I can buy locally, without having to buy a sata3 mobo or an SSD. Could you guys also perhaps let me know about prices as well as where I can buy such a HDD. Also, at the moment, my motherboard is getting pretty clogged with dust and so I was wondering how do

you clean dust off of hardware components? The other thing related to this, is that I was also wondering about liquid cooling. The thing with liquid cooling is that there are no fans involved, and therefore no dust. The only thing that worries me however, is that the liquid will leak at some point in time or another and I don't exactly want the liquid all over my pc components. I have all the required parts to set up the liquid cooling on the mobo. What also concerns me, is that I have a pretty nice looking cover for my graphics card at the moment (an ASUS ROG), so I don't exactly fancy having to remove that just for liquid cooling. How high maintenance is liquid cooling, i.e. are they more high maintenance than fans? Lastly, I see that most high-end systems these days are coming with Blu-ray drives built in. The thing is though, I see the DVD-RW etc. specs on a Blu-ray drive are less than that of a standard DVD drive. Does this then mean that e.g. if I install a game from it, it won't read as fast as the DVD drive, or will it read faster because of a new technology?"

1. Try the Western Digital Velociraptor

600GB HDD. It costs as much as some SSDs but it's the quickest magnetic drive you can buy. It's about R2,600 for the drive, and try online retailers like Zaps Online or Prophecy. 2. A small dust buster or blower would do the trick.

3. As for liquid cooling, I can't advocate for it as I'm not a fan. In my opinion it's too much maintenance for very little gain (component temperature will still be determined by ambient air temperature). There are still fans involved (on the radiator) and there is definitely maintenance, save for the self contained units.

4. Blu-ray read and write speeds are not compatible with DVD speeds. Blu-ray 1x is faster than DVD 1x because of higher areal density. Blu-Ray 1x is about DVD 4x speed.

#### HARD DRIVE FORMATTING From: Santa Claus

RECENTLY BOUGHT A SAMSUNG

external hard drive which came preformatted in the FAT32 format. The manual lists a file size limit of 4GB which doesn't seem favourable. I just need advice on whether I should continue using it in that format or if NTFS is a better option.

Neo: Change to NTFS and you'll be able to use larger files, but be warned not every device reads NTFS, e.g. the Xbox 360 and the PS3.

#### GTX480 SLI?

From: pwn steam

EY NEO, I WAS just wondering about a SLI setup I wanted to try. I used to have a 9600GT and now I recently got a GTX480 but I'm thinking of running the two in SLI and using the 9800GT for PhyX. Do you think that would be a good idea or should I rather let the GTX480 handle the PhysX? Oh and would any old PC Shop sell a SLI Cable because I never got one with either of the



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If you'd like our tech guru, Neo, to answer your hardware questions, send a mail to **lauren@nag.co.za**. There aren't any prizes for the letters we print, just simple and honest advice (that is, if we can even decipher the garbled e-mail we sometimes get).

**Neo:** You would not be able to run those cards in SLI, as they must be from the same generation and the same GPU. To use the 9800 for PhysX is possible but you don't need an SLI connector for this at all. While the GTX480 is significantly better at PhysX than the 9800, when it's dealing with graphics and physics simultaneously it will suffer needlessly when the 9800 could do the PhysX.

#### PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

From: Viktor Tittel

IGOT MY GPU (NVIDIA GeForce 9800 GT) around January 2010.It was giving me the best graphics that I could possibly imagine with a screen of 1440x900 resolutions. All my games were set on full graphics with very smooth performance. Later on (about 2/3 months ago) I got a new 23.7 inch screen, with a resolution of 1920x1080,and still all my games were running smoothly, until about a week and a half ago LOTRO gave me a few freezescreens, had to restart my pc to get rid of it. Then the next day I came home from school, decided to play LOTRO but the game was lagging like \$h!t, at 9 fps. Same happened with DR2 and all my other games. I cleaned my whole pc, GPU included, still didn't work. Then I decided to format my hard drive (was running on Windows XP Pro) but didn't have the boot cd, went and bought Win 7 pro, formatted hard drive and still the problem remains. I ran stress tests on my hardware and found out that my GPU average fps on 1980x1080 is 16, while supposed to be around 40. Moral of the story: I'm getting 9 fps max on all my games, and I think it's the GPU is faulty in some way. Help plOx. Thanks"

**Neo:** Your graphics card should still be under warranty so you could return it and get it swopped out if it's faulty. However it could be that your GPU is overheating and not changing to 3D mode but staying at 2D clocks to protect from permanent damage. Use GPU-Z (http://www.techpowerup.com/ gpuz/) and trace the temperatures and clocks (open it, do not close it but start LOTR). Run the performance tests, then quit the game. Take a look at the clocks in the GPU-Z history and temps and this will tell you what is happening with your GPU. NAG

# IN THE REPUBLIC OF GAMERS, HAPPY COMBOS COME WITH FREE GAMES.



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# & **WIN** A VG236

When you buy the G51 Gaming Series notebook, you automatically stand a chance to win a 3D monitor play your free

**3D MONITOR** game with in 3D! Both offers valid from 1 November 2010 till 31 December 2010 or until R.O.G. stocks last. see www.asus.co.za/rog for details (We're also prone to outbursts of spot prizes on facebook.com/asusza)













Perhaps the most ambitious attempt at being different in recent memory, the Antec Skeleton takes the rulebook for case design and throws it out the window. Striking visuals, impressive cooling, support for a wide array of hardware and a rather large price tag, the Skeleton dares to be different. Does it appeal to you?

Separated into two sections, the upper of these is for mounting the motherboard and all the components that attach themselves to it. Tall enough for all but the biggest air coolers, and long enough for all but the longest graphics cards, the Skeleton manages to remain compatible with most hardware despite its adventurous design.

The first thing you notice about the Skeleton is the open air design, complete with a monster 250mm fan on top of the case. Visually striking, beneficial to cooling, yet susceptible to dust and your friends' fingers, this will be the main selling point of the Skeleton.

#### **Specifications**

- 4 Drive Bays: External 2 x 5.25"; Internal 2 x 3.5"; Optional 4 x 3.5" side panel mounted
- 7 Expansion slots including room for 11" video cards
- Cooling System: 1 top 250mm TriCool 3-speed multi colour customizable LED Fan; 1 front 92mm HD cooling fan
- Motherboard: Standard ATX
- No Power Supply included: To optimize performance of your Skeleton, your choice of power supply is crucial. Antec strongly recommends choosing from Signature or TruePower series.
- Unit Dimensions: 31.75 cm(H) x 37.6 cm(W) x 41.9 cm(D)
- Net Weight: 7.02 kg
- Gross Weight: 9.7 kg



LanBoy Air
World's First Modularized Chassis















# DirectX11: Tessellation – Game Changer or another promise?

**TESSELLATION IS WITHOUT A** doubt the largest and the most significant feature when it comes to DX11. For all the technical reasons it's great and what not, but not many people have given a thought to how it actually impacts the games we play. This is to be expected but lamentable as well.

As with all DX revisions and all things PC related, their value lies in the future and not in what you do with them right now, at least not entirely. This has been the case for years on end and it's unlikely to ever change. It's particularly true now with just about every game on the PC having to have the 360 or PS3 as the lowest common denominator. Until those gaming platforms support these features, we are unlikely to ever see them used on a large or relevant scale.

It is much like the introduction of HDR back in 2004. We didn't see large scale use of the technology as it was slow on low-end hardware until the Xbox 360 came out two years later and became the lowest denominator. It's then that we started to see it everywhere.

Tessellation, in theory, should help this but that is only from next generation consoles going forward. On the PC front as it is now, tessellation performance is not equal and it's sad that the 6000 series of AMD cards just don't have the grunt required to truly make use of this feature in a significant or meaningful way. This stands true for the NVIDIA cards as well, because despite being much better at tessellation than their AMD counterparts, it's just not

The good news however is that the ground work has been laid and by the time the next generation consoles show up we will have geometry manipulating performance that is many times better than the best GPUs today have to offer. We are talking in the order of five to 10 times the performance. This doesn't mean the consoles will have equal power, but they will have at least half the geometry power.

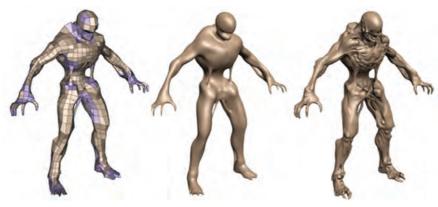
Since tessellation can be adapted on the fly and at runtime, we can finally enjoy the benefits of having a high-end graphics card over and above even more AA. At least this is how it's supposed to work in theory. History has shown that every feature that we were promised would revolutionize our games has turned out to be nothing but vapour. In fact nothing has been as game-changing as DirectX7 and possibly DirectX9.0c. Between DX7 and now, there have been at least 10 graphics card generations and indeed it's been 10 years since. So there's no reason for us to believe that this feature in DX11 will be any different. All we have is hope

"Nothing has been as game-changing as DirectX7 and possibly DirectX9.0c. Between DX7 and now, there have been at least ten graphics card generations and indeed it's been 10 years since."

and trust that the tools that have been in development will actually make this a reality instead of something that could have been.

This is particularly important because past "full HD" we are not going to receive any other qualitative bump in screen fidelity hence pixel rates will continue to mean significantly less, while pixel quality and geometry density will come to the fore. At this point I think most people would hate to play a game in 2013 that looks like the best the PC has to offer today. The solution is to scale the exact same game from the console to the PC, with increasing levels of complexity for the scenes depending on how much tessellation\geometry power there is.

All we can do in the meantime is sit and wait. Enjoy what we have and hope it gets even better significantly quicker than ever before. NAG





## World's Fastest DX11 GPU



### WinFast® GeForce GTX 580

- · World's Fastest DirectX 11 GPU
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- · NVDIA PhysX technology
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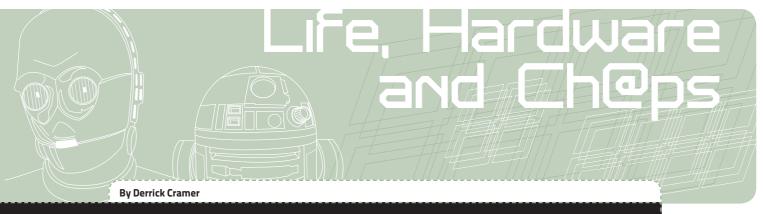




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Tel: (041) 398 7082 Fax: (041) 398 7135





### Budgeting tips for the year ahead

**T'S THAT TIME OF** the year again, most of you will soon be getting hardware upgrades in the form of Christmas presents, while the rest will get their yearly envelope with a monetary contribution from Aunt Gertrude and Uncle Ferguson with a card that says, "Don't understand these newfangled thingamajigs and wouldn't know what to get you." Everyone loves getting new hardware and enjoying lag free games, so here's how you can without breaking

First off, set yourself up a second bank account, or if you'd like to keep it old school, get a piggybank that fits under your bed and put a bit of money away every month. That's all there is to it. I know, I know, that was a bit anticlimactic, but humour me for a second and let's look at the numbers. Most power supplies come with a three year warranty, and if you do your homework correctly, you'll end up buying a PSU that will have enough watts for any system you can afford for the same period of time. Now comes the saving bit. Put R50 a month into your account/piggy bank for the three year period, and forget about it. Three years later, you'll end up with R1,800, and that's before you sell off your old PSU on the second-hand market. Now for R1,800 you can go out and buy a highend PSU that will last three to five years no matter the system you're running, all for only R50 per month.

Still not convinced? Another example then. Let's say R400 per month, less than the price of a new release game, less than the price most of you spend on a cell phone contract, and much less than some of you spend on booze for the month. That's R4,800 a year. Imagine the hardware you could buy for R4,800 at the end of every year. You could buy yourself the top-of-the-range X58 chipset board for that, or perhaps a GTX480. Maybe a dual 24-inch LED screen setup is to your liking, it is within budget after all. Perhaps you want a high-end case? You could go out and buy something like the Coolermaster HAF X or Antec DF-85 and still have enough left over for 6GB of DDR3 RAM. Or if you're severely lacking in the storage department, how does 10TB of storage sound? What about a complete set of gaming peripherals including headphones, mouse, mouse pad and keyboard? All of this for R400 a month or less? Sounds like a fair deal to me.

While you're using the time in between upgrades to save, a bit of research won't hurt either. Read reviews, look at comparisons, make heads and tails of charts, and don't get caught up in theoretical numbers. P70,000 in 3DMark Vantage is great, but can it play Metro 2033 on

high at 1,920x1,200 with AA? There are certain things to look out for in reviews, and knowing what to look for can make your decision easier. First off, resolution. Look for tests done at the resolution you play at. You shouldn't worry about which card is better at 2,560x1,600 if you still game at 1,680x1,050, and if you don't turn AA on during games, don't worry too much about which card handles AA better. Power consumption is the other big one to look out for, so after the performance figures, glance over the temperatures, glance over the noise the fan makes, but pay good attention to the power drain. If you plan well, you will never have to worry about whether your PSU is

"Look for tests done at the resolution you play at. You shouldn't worry about which card is better at 2,560x1,600 if you still game at 1,680x1,050, and if you don't turn AA on during games, don't worry too much about which card handles AA better."

powerful enough for your graphics card. [Frontosa sent us a handy Corsair Performance Hardware User's Guide titled How to Select the Ideal PSU, which we've put on the Cover DVD in the 'Extras' folder this month. If you have no idea how to work out what power your rig will need, this document covers it in four simple steps. - Lauren]

At the end of the day, unless you have Chronic upgrade disorder (CUD) you will probably end up keeping your system until it starts to lag in games, so be smart and use the time between upgrades to save. With newrelease titles pushing the limits and constantly improving graphics, the longevity of key hardware components such as graphics cards is greatly diminished. If you don't plan and research potential upgrades correctly, or neglect your hardware savings fund, you'll end up with a laggy machine and your gaming experience won't be as enjoyable as it should be. Happy hardware hunting! NAG



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### DIY: Hands-on with Dremel

Part 10 – NAG Case Mod Part 2

YE BEEN INVOLVED IN case modding for a long time, but I'll tell you something – it's been ages since I had this much fun modding a case. Working with cases as high-end as the Lian-Li I'm using for this project is always something I enjoy. The toughest part is putting the Dremel against the case the very first time. After that, it's all easy!

In this article I'm going to show you two of the many things I've done to the Lian-Li PC-A77F case.

One of the biggest changes I've made to the case would have to be the colour. This is one of those changes that are so simple, but yield such an amazing result. I spent an afternoon disassembling the case and sent it off to be powder coated. Much of the case was held together with pop-rivets, which all needed to be drilled out with my Dremel. I had them powder coat all the silver internals black, and all the black exterior was made white. The result is just amazing. (A, B)

Now, while the powder-coating process is fairly problem free, there's one thing that needs to be done once everything arrives: re-thread all the holes. The powder coating process fills the holes, which means that no screws fit anymore. No lies – re-threading this case was a tedious job.

The second thing I want to show you is the installation of the 7" LCD USB monitor (1). We imported this little guy from the US specifically for this mod. I'm really excited for this little screen! I went with this specific screen because it's USB only, so it doesn't need any VGA/DVI input. How awesome is that? Anyway, I decided to install this monitor inside the case, and window the side panel of the case above this screen. This allows the display to be seen from outside the case, displaying system related information like CPU and GPU temperatures, memory consumption, HDD space, etc. I haven't seen this done many times, and I'm fairly certain it's a first in South Africa, so I just had to do it. The first thing I had to do was disassemble the screen, and tear it down to just the panel (2). Then I cut a hole in one of the 5.25-inch panels. This panel would then hold the LCD in place. I also covered this panel with a new custommade panel to cover all the ugly holes that are usually used for optical drives and hard disks (3). That panel still needs to be powder

I had to bend little "arms" to hold the LCD in place. I started off with little 1.2x10x25mm tabs (4). In order to bend these things properly, and in such a way that doesn't look cheap, I needed to use a bending break, which I didn't have. So after researching these things, I was left with only one thought: "People actually BUY this stuff? It can't be that difficult to build?" So, after a trip to the hardware store, R42, and about half an hour's work, I had a bending break that was absolutely perfect for what I needed (5). The only thing it needed was a small hole cut in place for the "arms" to fit in for their second bend, but my monstrous Dremel 4000 series sorted that one out for me (6). Using this makeshift bending break, I was able to make perfect little fasteners for the back of the LCD screen (7,













8). They're a really good fit as well (9). Once I had threaded the 3mm holes in these little fittings, I drilled all the relevant holes in the panels that would hold them in place. I used black dome screws that we imported from Germany for the mod to hold the fasteners in place, and once I had installed it all, I was left with this (10, 11, 12). The photos really don't do it justice. The panel looks so good! Now, that LCD can be used as anything,

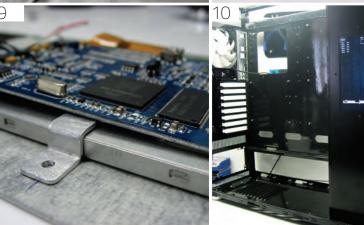
really. I'll be setting it up for system data, as mentioned above, but you could use it for movies too if you really wanted.

That's it! I hope you enjoyed this update. Expect articles from me every month next year. I'm excited to write for you guys every month. If you'd like to see more of my work, visit my website – daejavoo.com.

Mod hard! NAG

**Ettienne Venter** 

# 5







### THE NEW **DREMEL TRIO** 3 TOOLS IN 1



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UYING GIFTS FOR PEOPLE during the holiday season can be a real pain in the ass, especially if the person you're buying for is a gamer. They tend to have very particular tastes and strong opinions on things, so if you have a moment of FAIL when choosing the proper present for that special gamer in your life, beware. Just make sure you have your profanity filters turned on.

Here at NAG, we sympathise with you. Being gamers ourselves, we know how important it is to get the right gift – and since most of the people in our lives are also gamers, we also know the importance of giving properly. But it's a little simplistic to lump all gamers into one giant heap of keyboards, bean-bag chairs and Doritos. No, every

gamer is different, but it would be a little impractical for us to print the wish list of every individual gamer in South Africa, so we'll try to strike a compromise by identifying ten of the most common types of gamer. It's up to you to figure out what category the person you're shopping for falls into, then buy him or her one or more of the gifts we've recommended.\*

To help you out, we've done a little research and interviewed ten gamers\*\* and found out what they like and don't like, and generally what makes them tick. So without further ado, we present to you NAG'S 2010 ULTIMUIT HOLODAY GIFT GIDE 4 GAMERZ.

-Clannie is

Happy shopping. Losers.

# nd the rocks, I think something????

ho the hell are you? Where's your clan tag? Dude, seriously – you're nobody without a clan tag. It's scientific fact that you'll never possess half the skill that I do unless you join a clan. Dude, I've got 7,015 hours logged in MW2, and that makes you a loser. No, it doesn't count that you fragged me 50 times in a single game last night. You just got super lucky, and I was seriously having an off night there. What other games do I play besides Counter-Strike/Call of Duty/Bad Company 2/Medal of Hono? Well, nothing really. I'm too busy honing my skills to bother with anything else. I mean, our parents buy us the sequels and stuff that comes out for the games my clan plays, but those are always super crap because they always change things and make the new game so much better and stuff, so we all just go back to the older games anyway. I love Christmas, because that's when my parents buy me all the stuff I need to be the best camper... erm, I mean clannie I can be. I can't buy the stuff myself, because I haven't made the big time - yet...

### **RECOMMENDED GIFTS:**

Mad Catz TRITTON Limited Edition Call of Duty: Black Ops True 5.1 ProGaming Headset - R1,200

www.madcatz.com

Mad Catz Call of Duty: Black Ops Stealth Gaming Mouse & USB Dog Tag Bundle - R850

www.madcatz.com

Antec LanBoy Air chassis - R2,199 www.frontosa.co.za



ude. Games today just like totally lack the soul of the classics man. Like *Galaga*, man! That game was totally boss! And don't even get me started on *Donkey Kong*, homeslice! Mario is like so mega tight! Nowadays, it's all like just explosions and bullets and like real-looking stuff. *Call of Duty*? Ugh. Gag me with a spoon! Cheeuh! Like take a chill pill, Poindexter. Games were like so much better when you just had to imagine that those four pixels were a tank and 8-bit music was the bomb diggity! Whoa, bummer dude. I gotta bail. There's an *Alf* marathon starting on TV right now! Righteous! Time to charge up the flux capacitor to 1.21 gigawatts and go oldskoo!

### RECOMMENDED GIFTS:

Joystick Junkies Flight Bag - **R500** www.lookandlisten.co.za

Super Mario Bros. 25th Anniversary DSi XL or Wii bundle - **R2,199 & R2,499** 

www.nintendo.co.za

Anything from Good Old Games www.gog.com



# The Jock

owzit boet. You good? Lekker, charna. Flip boet, you're looking flippin' tit hey. You been klapping the gym? Ja, it shows bru. I just wanna lick your pecs... I mean spot you for another set of weights, boet. What, you wanna talk about games? Jarre charna, Iflippin' love games. What, Resident Evil? Don't be stupid bru, that's a flippin' movie. No boet, I'm talking about those flippin' shweet FIFA games and that other one... what's it called? Ja, PES – that one. Those rugby games are also tit, hey. I just don't shmaak that there are all those flippin' buttons that you've got to press just to get the okes to flippin' throw the ball or hug and make out and all that stuff, charna. No boet, buttons are hard huh. Those Madden games are also kief, charna. 'Cept those Americans are moffies with all their flippin' padding. All this talk has me pumped, boet. Let's klap some Rugby 08, like, right now bru. Winner gets to stroke the loser's biceps...

### RECOMMENDED GIFTS:

Razer Gaming Gear Bag - R779 www.frontosa.co.za

Xbox 360 S with Kinect - R1,899 www.xbox.com/kinect

EA Sports Active 2.0 Kinect (Xbox 360) - **R895** www.btgames.co.za

\*\* Totally official interviews with totally real and not-at-all stereotypical douschnozzles.\*\*\*

Sigh, They don't make good games anymore

iquid Vitogen

< GIFT GIDE 4 GAMERZ >



### The Overclocker

et's get one thing straight: a computer is not a toy. A computer is a precision instrument of speed and power, designed with the sole purpose of posting the highest 3DMark scores possible. This isn't child's play; this is serious business! You want a toy, go buy a Wii – and good duck getting that to run Heaven Benchmark or *Crysis Warhead* with 16X AA. Seriously. It's not even water cooled! But water cooling is for sissies anyway. I only use liquid nitrogen... last week, I had my i7 980X overclocked up to 20GHz but had the temperature down below absolute zero and was clocking some sick Super Pi 32M times. I even had one run that finished before it actually started. I'm hardcore like that.

### **RECOMMENDED GIFTS:**

Thermaltake Frio CPU cooler - **R599** 

www.corex.co.za

3DMark 11

www.3dmark.com

FNB PayPal account to order cool modding and overclocking gear from overseas

www.fnb.co.za



Gun!

Nothing!

# The Stig

Vroom. Vroom. Beep. Beep. Beep. Bong! Screeeeeeeech. Vrraaaaaa. Vrraaaaaa. Vrraaaaaa. Errrrrrrrrrrr. Vrmm vrrm rmmmmmmmmmm! THUMP THUMP screeeeeeeee KABAM! Start button. Restart race? X. Vroom. Vroom.

### **RECOMMENDED GIFTS:**

Playseat Evolution Gaming Seat - **R1,999** www.playseatssa.co.za

Gran Turismo 5 Signature Edition (PS3) - **R1,555** www.btgames.co.za

Wesco *Top Gear* Stig Helmet Projection Alarm Clock - **£24.99** www.amazon.co.uk









# The NOOL

i there. My friend said I should speak to you guys at NAG about buying, um, videogames or whatever. You guys have games and gadgets and stuff in your magazine, so you obviously sell them, right? Like, you're basically a retailer, right? What would you recommend? Um, well... I don't know what I like. I've seen some games and played them a bit when I visit friends and stuff and they're fun, so I want to play them too. I like that game where you have a gun and a knife and you shoot guys and stab them sometimes and stuff. I don't know what it's called. There's also that one game where you're Spider-Man and you can swing and punch and stuff. I remember the graphics were good and it looked cool. Do you guys have that one? Why are you looking at me like that?

### **RECOMMENDED GIFTS:**

Xbox 360 LIVE 2100 Points - **R335** www.btgames.co.za

Thermaltake Lanbox - R999 www.corex.co.za

PowerMat Home & Office – R899; PowerCube - **R369** www.bowline.co.za

# ne Scourge of Azeroth

Okay guys, welcome to Zul'Farrak. I'll be your group leader tonight and I just want you to know that I take my WoW work very, very seriously. Just FYI, I know my character name is Thunderthighs69 and I'm roaming Azeroth as a sexy Night Elf princess, but don't ask me for my number. It's very flattering, but I'm a dude. Okay, any questions? I'm not sure how my personal preference in games has anything to do with this, but okay: I love MMOs. I live MMOs. I've lost jobs because of MMOs. You're not going to find anyone more dedicated to doing the great, important work of maintaining a second, virtual life. I love MMOs, but WoW is my game. I've tried other MMOs, but they're all crap and none of them can hold a candle to this. Best game ever. I'd sacrifice my mom for Blizzard. I already sold her to Bolivian flesh smugglers to pay for my seven WoW accounts. That's dedication.

### **RECOMMENDED GIFTS:**

World of WarCraft Cataclysm Collector's Edition (PC) - **R275** www.btgames.co.za

Razer Anansi MMO Gaming Keyboard - **R880** www.frontosa.co.za

Razer Naga Epic MMO Wireless Gaming Mouse - R1,169 www.frontosa.co.za



# The Leecher

ude, do you have the latest season of *True Blood*? Oh my gosh, you do?!!'ll give you all five episodes of *Samurai Tentacle Lovers Oronichi VII* for that. I'll even throw in *Samurai Tentacle Lovers-Oronichi VI*. My IP is 79, can you just dump it in the "Accounting 2009" folder? You can find *STLO* in the "Invoices and Balance Sheets - October" folder. Yeah, my mom never looks there, pretty sweet huh? She'll never know LOL. This is so frikkin' awesome dude. I've been here since Friday night, haven't played a single game yet. I've just been ripping so much stuff. I've got like 2TB of free stuff already. I can't believe these idiots actually come to these LANs to play games. What a waste. Nah, I won't play games this weekend. I'm just gonna pirate a bunch of new games and play them when I get home. Damn, I'm cool.

### **RECOMMENDED GIFTS:**

Freecom Hard Drive Classic II 2TB - **R1,799** 

www.esquire.co.za

ASUS VG236 3D LCD Monitor with NVIDIA 3D Vision kit - **R5,499** 

ASUS O!Play HD2 HD Media Player (Excluding HDD) - **R1,349** www.asus.co.za









we \*giggle\*. So like this is so totally like super freaking awesome:):) I love playing games like soooo much:D But like yesterday I was playing online and some of the guys heard I was a chick and they were all like OMG YOURE A GIRL ARE YOU HOT HOW OLD ARE YOU DO YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND WANNA HOOK UP!!!!!!! Then like the other day a guy came into our TS channel and asked me what bra size I am:O Like seriously dude wtf????' I'm here to play games just like you, so stop being such a freaking stalker and go find yourself like a real girl to hang out with. I'm so gonna kick your ass next time I see you online: P And like dude, what's with all the heavy breathing into your mic? My sister says you should like totally get some exercise coz you sound very unfit getting all out of breath like that. Just saying. Mwa.

RECOMMENDED GIFTS: Razer Orca headphones - R499 www.frontosa.co.za

MSI GT 660 - **R19,999** www.corex.co.za

Sapphire ATI HD6870 - **R2,199** www.frontosa.co.za



# The Shredder

up bro. So, like, have you heard the latest *Ultimate Banjo Leopards* album? Man, it's sweet! I can't wait for them to put that *Snow Leotard* track in the next *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band*. It's gonna be totally wicked sick all over our faces, bro. I finally reached the dream last night: got 100 percent for *Through the Fire and Flames* in *GH III* on expert. My whole family was watching bro, cheering me on. They all took their lighters out, my sister took her top off, they were screaming my name: it was **insane**. Some chick my sister knows even threw her panties at me. I was like, "Whoa... this must be what rock gods feel like, bro." When the song was over and I'd hit every note, they literally exploded dude. It was... man, it was rad. I'm thinking about taking this show on the road, bro, bringing more plastic to the world of rock. The ladies are gonna go crazy for me, bro...

**RECOMMENDED GIFTS:** 

Guitar Hero Warriors of Rock Super Bundle - R1,999 www.lookandlisten.co.za

DJ Hero 2 - **R999** www.lookandlisten.co.za

Krator Dione C-1140 headphones - **R580** www.frontosa.co.za



< GIFT GIDE 4 GAMERZ >

Megan in 3D :) She da bomb!

# NAG's Gaming Rig Buyer's Guide

ITH PLENTY OF PEOPLE looking to spend their savings and bonuses on new gaming rigs, choosing a system to buy can be very confusing. If you're tech savvy, you will know exactly what you want, but even then putting together the right system can be daunting, and if anything, just downright tedious. So in the spirit of the season of giving, we have pooled our collective knowledge and "built" six different gaming rigs for you: three AMD and three Intel, from reputable online retailers. From the basic quadcore system to the high-end, six-core powered machine.

core system to the high-end, six-core powered machine.

The prices we have listed below were accurate at the time of writing, so do keep this in mind, as some parts may have increased in price and other decreased, but these are the ballpark figures you can work on. It's also worth noting that these rigs do not include peripherals such as mice, keyboards, speakers and such. Also not included in the total price for each rig is the labour of building one of these, nor have we included the cost of the operating system, as you should already have your own legitimate copy (if not then you ought to be buying Windows 7 64-bit).

While we have tried to stick to the initial budgets we set ourselves of R7,000, R11,000 and R18,000, we haven't necessarily stuck to them at all costs. Ultimately, an extra R500 over the course of two years is negligible.

With that said, we have compiled three versions of an AMD-powered build and three comparable Intel-powered machines. All of these should prove to be very capable systems, delivering some compelling numbers in synthetic tests and real life scenarios.

### **SELECTION CRITERIA**

- The budget for each rig was R7,000 (Budget), R11,000 (Mid-range), and R18,000 (High-end).
- Each rig must stay relevant for at least two years, so that means no taking short cuts on the components.
- This budget must include CPU, motherboard, RAM, VGA card(s), PSU, case, hard drive, optical drive and a monitor.
- These components should preferably be available locally.

- Neo Sibeko and Derrick Crammer





### Budget AMD Rig

CPU:	AMD Athlon II X4 640 3GHZ	
Motherboard:	GIGABYTE 880G UD3H	
VGA:	Club 3D ATI Radeon HD5770	
RAM:	Mushkin Silverline 4GB DDR3 1600MHz	
PSU:	Coolermaster Extreme Power Plus 550W	
Hard Drive:	Seagate Barracuda 500GB ST3500418AS	
Optical Drive:	Samsung 22X FOSH-S223C	
Case:	Antec VSK2000	
Monitor:	BenQ G2220HDA 21.5" LCD	
Total Cost:	R7, 291	

### STORES TO BUY FROM

- Zaps online | www.zapsonline.co.za (motherboard, RAM, case, optical drive)
- iKonic IT | www.ikonicit.co.za (VGA, monitor)
- The Prophecy Shop | www.prophecy.co.za (CPU, PSU, HDD)

MD HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS with budget systems over the last few years. However, this may just be perception and not a reality because as it stands, building a useful budget system on the AMD platform can prove to be just as costly as it would be on an Intel platform. The only difference here is that there's a viable upgrade path for AMD's AM3, unlike for Intel's LGA775 which is just not worth the bother as an investment.

Since the budget was very tight and we actually exceeded it a little, it's worth keeping in mind that, saving R300 and ending up with a system that is incapable of playing any game at a reasonable resolution is pointless. With 4GB of DDR1600 RAM and a potent Radeon 5770 all powered by a high-frequency quad-core Athlon II makes for some impressive performance. As a result of the price limitations, a monitor with digital inputs was out of the question, however if you can spare even R200 more you can get a system with DVI and possibly HDMI as well.

We could have chosen a cheaper motherboard, but the GIGABYTE 8800G offers USB3 support, RAID and it is based on AMD's latest chipset. Overall, this would be a very balanced system, with some longevity and should be capable of running any game on the market today with medium to low detail at 1,680x1,050 resolutions.

### Budget Intel Rig

CPU:	Core i5 760	
Motherboard:	P7H55-M/USB3	
VGA:	HD5750	
RAM:	Mushkin Silverline 4GB DDR3 1333 CL9-9-9-24	
PSU:	GIGABYTE Odin 585W	
Hard Drive:	Samsung 1TB F3	
Optical Drive:	LG Dual Layer DVD Writer	
Case:	GIGABYTE X8	
Monitor:	LG W1943 18.5"	
Total Cost:	R7.047.60	

### STORES TO BUY FROM

- Zaps online | www.zapsonline.co.za (RAM)
- Landmark Computers | www.landmarkpc.co.za (HDD)
- PC International | www.pcint.co.za (CPU, motherboard, VGA, optical drive, monitor)
- The Prophecy Shop | www.prophecy.co.za (case, PSU)

OME MAY THINK THAT R7,000 for gaming system would be too low, and say you shouldn't expect much bang for your buck. Well as the list above shows, this couldn't be further from the truth. Spending just a bit extra on the CPU will net you an i5 760 in the build, which means you're getting a true quad-core Intel CPU as opposed to the dual-core i3 and i5 variants, and should provide enough power for a two-year system lifespan. ASUS provides the perfect board for the system in the form of the P7H55-M/USB3. While missing out on Crossfire/SLI, the board provides all the normal features one would expect in a gaming system nowadays, along with SATA 3 and USB 3 for a future-proof system. All this in a mATX package. Mushkin provides us with 4GB of RAM suitable for gaming, while VGA duties are seen to by an AMD HD5750. The card has enough power to play modern titles at medium- to high-detail settings when paired with the LG W1943 monitor also found in the system. GIGABYTE provide ample power and space with their Odin series PSU and X8 series case, both of which will cope well with future upgrades. Lastly, a Samsung F3 1TB drive provides ample storage for the average gamer while remaining cool and quiet.



CPU:	AMD Phenom II X4 965 Black Edition	
Motherboard:	ASUS M4A88T-V EVO/USB3	
VGA:	Sapphire ATI Radeon HD6850 1GB or Club3D GTX460 1GB	
RAM:	Mushkin Silverline 4GB DDR3 1600MHz	
PSU:	Coolermaster GX650	
Hard Drive:	Seagate Barracuda 500GB ST3500418AS (OS) and Seagate Barracuda ST31000528AS 1TB	
Optical Drive:	LG Lightscribe DVD Writer	
Case:	Lian-Li PC-A06 Silver	
Monitor:	Samsung BX2350 LED	
Total Cost:	R11,073	

### STORES TO BUY FROM

- Zaps online | www.zapsonline.co.za (monitor, RAM, VGA-GTX460)
- **iKonic IT** | www.ikonicit.co.za (CPU, motherboard)
- **The Prophecy Shop** | www.prophecy.co.za (optical drive, case, HDD, PSU, VGA-HD6850)

NLIKE THE BASIC OR entry-level system, with a mid-range system the CPU power is significantly increased thanks to the Phenom II X4 965 Black Edition. As stated in the beginning 4GB is the bare minimum these days, but is also a good amount of RAM to have as you're unlikely to find a game that needs more memory than this for a number of years.

The monitor has been upgraded to a 23-inch LED-backlit LCD which provides a significant picture upgrade over a conventional CCFL backlit LCD. Since you will be spending vast amounts of hours on this machine, be it watching movies, playing games or anything else you'll appreciate the brightness, contrast and rich colour reproduction of this monitor. Supporting a full-HD resolution, it supports HDCP as well for the day you decide to upgrade to a Blu-ray player or writer.

The graphics card of choice would be the AMD Radeon HD6850 which delivers very impressive performance at a reasonable price. However, if you worry about the sub-par Tessellation performance of the Radeon cards, the NVIDIA GTX460 is a viable alternative with 3D and PhysX support.

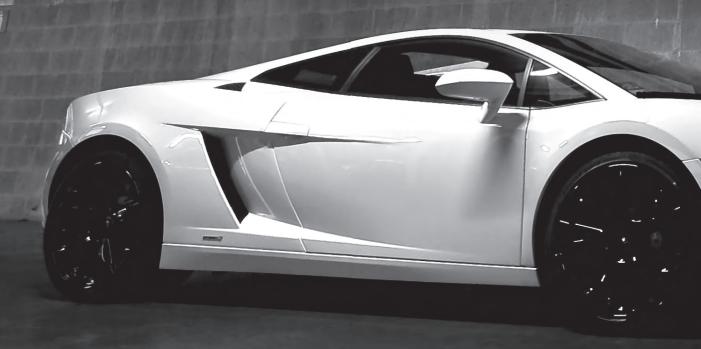
This system also packs two hard drives, which is always the best configuration not only for speed but data reliability as well. It's simple, the less you thrash a single disk, the longer it should last, in theory. Minimize your risk to data loss and enjoy the added benefit of a very responsive system.

CPU:	Core i5 760	
Motherboard:	GIGABYTE GA-H55M-USB3	
RAM:	Mushkin Redline DDR3 1600 CL7-7-7-18 2 x 2GB	
VGA:	MSI R5850 Twin Frozr II	
PSU:	Coolermaster RS750	
Hard Drive:	Samsung 1TB F3	
Optical Drive:	Dual Layer DVD Writer	
Case:	Coolermaster CM 690 II	
Monitor:	Samsung B2430H 24" Full HD	
Total Cost:	R11,086.26	

### STORES TO BUY FROM

- Zaps online | www.zapsonline.co.za (RAM)
- **Landmark Computers** | www.landmarkpc.co.za (HDD)
- **PC International** | www.pcint.co.za (CPU, optical drive, monitor)
- **The Prophecy Shop** | www.prophecy.co.za (motherboard, VGA, PSU, case)

**OVING UP TO A** mid range system, some of you may wonder at the i5 760 CPU. Well, the only CPU that is more powerful than the i5 760 on the P55 platform is the i7 860/870, which represents possibly the worst price/performance-ratio of any P55 based CPU currently available. Even so, the i5 760 is quite capable, and is now paired with the GIGABYTE GA-H55M-USB3, a board that supports everything the mid-level gamer may need: Crossfire/ SLI support, Raid support, USB3, SATA3 and more. Mushkin make another appearance, this time with their Redline series. Rated as a CL7 kit, the RAM will provide enough bandwidth for the system to perform at its peak. The MSI 5850 in this system is very well priced and not much in its category can come near in terms of price and performance. The Coolermaster RS750 provides enough power and connectors for an SLI/CrossfireX system; this will ensure that should you wish to add another 5850 into the mix, your last worry will be power. The Coolermaster CM 690 II is a case many are familiar with because of its popularity among gamers. This is due to its wide array of features, great build quality and aggressive pricing, and it was an easy choice for the mid-range build. Lastly, the Samsung B2430H monitor. Well priced, you get a full-HD 24-inch monitor with a wide array of connectors, perfect for games or movies.



CPU:	AMD Phenom II X6 1090T Black Edition	
Motherboard:	ASUS M4A89TDPRO/USB3	
VGA:	EVGA GeForce GTX470	
RAM:	Corsair XMS3 2x4GB DDR3 2000MHZ CL9	
PSU:	Corsair TX850W	
Hard Drive:	Western Digital Caviar Black 500GB (OS) and Seagate Barracuda ST31000528AS 1TB	
Optical Drive:	LG CH10LS20 Blu-ray Writer	
Case:	Antec Dark Fleet DF-85	
Monitor:	Samsung BX2450 LED	
Total Cost:	R17,873	

### STORES TO BUY FROM

- Zaps online | www.zapsonline.co.za (motherboard, case) iKonic IT | www.ikonicit.co.za (RAM, PSU, monitor)
- The Prophecy Shop | www.prophecy.co.za (CPU, VGA, HDD, optical drive)

HE HIGH-END SYSTEM DOESN'T represent what we would consider to be the ultimate PC built on an AMD platform, but does allow you to play almost every game available today (save for Metro 2033) at maximum graphical fidelity with at least 4xAA at the screen native resolution (1,920x1,080). The AMD 6-core Black Edition CPU has lots of grunt, especially for video encoding, and the more recent games that can take advantage of multiple cores.

System memory has also been doubled and the speed increased to 2000MHz. Such RAM speeds are only possible on the newer Phenom cores and 8GB of it means you have plenty to work with, whether you're using productivity/creative suites or just multitasking. The added benefit of multiple threads and memory makes this the perfect power house for any power user interested in AMD.

The monitor, much like that of the mid-range system, is LED backlit, but is in the 24-inch guise. It may not offer a higher resolution, but does allow you to sit further back. Particularly important because this machine features a Blu-ray R/W drive, so you can watch your Blu-ray movies in full HD without hassle (monitor supports HDCP). We went with the GTX470 instead of the Radeon HD5850 because it's faster and offers more in terms of features. With a slightly higher budget a Radeon HD5870 may be a good alternative.

CPU:	Core i7 950		
Motherboard:	ASUS Rampage III Formula		
RAM:	Corsair Dominator 1600 CL8 3 x 2GB		
VGA:	EVGA GTX480		
PSU:	Corsair TX950w		
Hard Drive:	Samsung 1TB F3		
SSD:	OCZ Vertex 2 60GB		
Optical Drive:	Dual Layer DVD Writer		
Case:	Corsair 600T		
Monitor:	Samsung BX2335 LED		
Total Cost:	R18,049.21		

### STORES TO BUY FROM

- Zaps online | www.zapsonline.co.za (RAM)
- **Landmark Computers** | www.landmarkpc.co.za (HDD, case)
- **PC International** | www.pcint.co.za (CPU, optical drive, monitor)
- The Prophecy Shop | www.prophecy.co.za (motherboard, VGA, SSD)

INALLY, OUR HIGH-END INTEL system. It's much of what you'd expect with an Intel i7 950 doing the processing work, and this on a Rampage III Formula is a winning combination. The board supports everything and more, including its own onboard X-Fi music chip. SLI/CrossfireX support, USB 3 and SATA 3, a very powerful bios for overclocking; this really is one of the best boards out there. Corsair Dominators are named that for a reason, and with this memory kit bandwidth will never be a problem, and with 6GB of RAM in total, your PC won't feel sluggish anytime soon. A monster GTX480 takes care of the graphics side of things, and just in case you want to add another into the mix later on, the PC comes equipped with a Corsair TX950watt PSU, enough for almost any system you can think of. No high-end system would be complete without an SSD, and this one is no different. With a 60GB OCZ Vertex 2 drive, system lag and loading time is a thing of the past. The trusty old 1TB Samsung F3 brings up the rear for system storage. All of this is housed in a Corsair 600T, a perfect blend of size, style, features, cooling and cost, the 600T is perfect for any high-end system. Lastly, gaming on a Samsung BX2335 full-HD LED screen will be nothing but a dream, especially with a system that can run games at maximum detail without breaking a sweat. NAG



### **GIGABYTE GV-R685D5-1GD**

ATI IS NO MORE despite what AMD had initially said when it took over the Canadian company. The brand that was previously known as ATI is now all AMD. While lamentable to some, we believe it does make sense in the long run. If you've had a bad experience with an ATI graphics controller before, you just may be encouraged to try again, with AMD's first official graphics parts the 6800 series.

If this was going to be AMD's first graphics processor then the 6800 series are a great start. For what was formerly ATI, the 5000 series could be considered an exit with a bang. The 6800 series builds on what the Cypress core was but makes it all more efficient through some minor design changes and some software upgrades in terms of driver features.

What's important to know about the 6800 series is that despite the X800 designation, these are not replacements for the hugely successful Radeon HD5850 and HD5870. As to why AMD decided to confuse everyone at this juncture we cannot be sure, but it is suggested that they simply may be making space for other SKUs beneath these which will probably occupy the sub \$199 price point which traditionally used to be the glass ceiling for mid-range cards.

So in a way think of the 6800 series as replacements for the Radeon 5750 and 5770, but they are not and rather fit in between the 5770 and the 5870. Confusing indeed but essentially what it all means is that you get great performance at cheaper prices.

There's no denying it that these graphics cards were needed to combat what is arguably NVIDIA's most successful DirectX11 product in the form of the GF104 core (GTX460). To varying degrees AMD has succeeded in this and by and large taken the performance crown at both price points.

Technical changes to what was previously the Cypress core are minor; however these

are covered in our write up of the Radeon HD6870 (also in this issue). For the 6850, we are mainly concerned with the performance at this magical \$199 price point. For what you pay and what you receive we have to admit that AMD and by extension GIGABYTE has hit the nail on the head.

GIGABYTE graphics cards have continued to improve at a dramatic rate since the introduction of the Super Overclock series. Not only is the SOC line impressive, but this charge into better than average graphics cards has improved the "regular" cards as well, such as this one. The WindForce 2X cooling mechanism employed on most of their latest products continues to impress with incredible performance and whisper quiet operation. The graphics card is virtually inaudible even under load. With the fan set to the highest rotational speeds, you'll still barely hear it over the other system fans.

The rest of the card is pretty much standard affair however, with support for new EYEFINITY configurations and official Stereoscopic 3D support, AMD is moving their graphics controllers further in the right

Performance wise, it isn't what we'd call a screamer but it is most certainly better than the competing GTX460 768MB parts in every test or game save for those with Tessellation use. Unfortunately despite some tangible improvements, the tessellation performance isn't where we'd have hoped especially given how ATI used to champion the use of Tessellation in their marketing of the 5000 series. Overall however it's hard to find fault with this GIGABYTE Radeon HD6850 offering. They could have just stuck a sticker on a reference product and called it a day, but the company bothered to make something that looks appealing and has both better thermals and lower fan noise levels than the reference products. If the price is right this just may be the Radeon HD6850 to buy. NAG

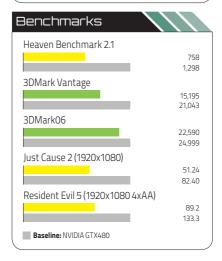
Neo Sibeko

### Specifications

Core: 775MHz Barts Pro (40nm)

Processors: 960 Render Outputs: 32

Memory: 1024MB GDDR5 4.0GHz (128GB/sec) API: DirectX11/OpenGL 4.x /OpenCL 1.X



### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + Very cool
- + Great performance

### >Minus

 Tessellation performance still lacking

### >Bottom Line

AMD's answer to NVIDIA's GTX460 is not only faster, but has forced a much-welcomed price war.



# TOP-RATED GAMES













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### **Kingston SSDNOW V+ 128GB (SNVP325)**

SSDS HAVE COME A long way since Intel's X-25M wowed the power users. Just about every memory manufacturer now has an SSD and this has helped drive prices down. They're still not where they should be, but every little bit helps, and with drives such as the Kingston V+, things are looking good.

Kingston is no small company and has several different lines of SSDs catering for just about anyone from the budget conscious to the corporate user. Within their range there's probably a drive that best suites you and your pocket or rather performance

The V+ series is their highest performing family save for the Intel SSD powered E series. This series of drives promises, or rather states that sequential reads can be as high as 230MB/sec and writes up to 180Mb/sec. Impressive numbers no doubt. However these are not necessarily the most important figures when looking at SSD performance. In fact these can largely be ignored as marketing numbers as the vast majority of operations on a drive are not sequential, but random.

Add to that, these random reads and writes are not of the same size, so 4K random performance and 512K are the true measures of performance in line with the IOPS rate. This is where the drives performance matters the most. This also happens to be where the controller makes or breaks the drive. However we will discuss this later.

The Kingston drive makes use of a Toshiba T6UG1XBG controller in favour of the older models that feature the Samsung logic, needless to say this makes for a much faster drive. Packed with 128MB of DDR2 cache courtesy of Micron, TRIM support (native to the controller) the Kingston drive packs in some good performance. This is not to be taken lightly as unlike some other SSDs with a software-only TRIM feature, the Kingston drive will relatively keep the same

performance regardless of how empty or full it is. There is little write amplification for used cells so the performance you have when the drive is new is the performance you'll have when the drive is near full.

Back to the random write, read and latency results we discussed earlier. The Kingston drive suffers here in particular when compared to our current champion the OCZ AGILITY 2 with the SF1200 controller. Between the two drives there just is no comparison, even when you ignore the sequential performance. The maximum latency for the Kingston drive is concerning, indeed it's in milliseconds but when compared to other drives we have tested it's an order of magnitude slower and reminiscent of the very first SSDs to hit the market. Random reads of 4K blocks and writes are also off the pace. As stated earlier these are the vast majority of operations these days and these numbers are what make an SSD.

This as usual is a controller issue and maybe something that can be improved upon with a firmware update, but for now it's a real concern and given the pricing of this drive, there are significantly betterperforming SSDs in this discipline.

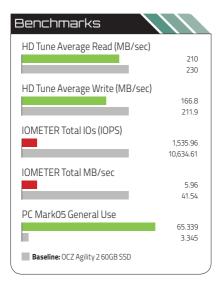
Overall this isn't a bad drive at all in fact it's worth a purchase if you're not too concerned with the random performance we measured. It's certainly a far better drive than Kingston's previous efforts and in some cases does eclipse some other well respected drives. The package that Kingston offers as well is compelling, with a drive mount converter, an optional USB converter package which makes it a little more appealing than other SSDs of around the same price. If you can get a good deal on this drive it is worth the purchase and won't disappoint you. You can rest assured that your performance, while not top-notch, will be consistent for the most part. NAG

Neo Sibeko

### Specifications |

Capacity: 128GB

Controller: Toshiba T6UG1XBG Interface: SATA 3Gbps



### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + Native TRIM Support
- + Consistent and predictable nerformance

### >MINUS

- Worrying latency
- Weak random transaction performance

### >Bottom Line

Kingston's most impressive SSD showing to date and one worth considering if you're in the market.





THE ULTIMATE GAMING EXPERIENCE



The Playseat Evolution Gaming Seat is a seat modeled after a race car with stands for your wheel and pedals. This will eliminate the need to find a table that's the perfect height to truly satisfy your need for speed. The Playseat can be adjusted for gamers of all heights and should be entirely compatible with most racing accessories.

The chair itself will exceed your expectations, offering a well-made, extremely comfortable experience while playing games. The frame is fully adjustable, and very stable once the knobs are tightened, providing an excellent platform for mounting your favourite racing wheel. In our opinion, there is no way to fully appreciate a racing wheel and pedals without this chair. For the price, quality, and ease of assembly, you can't beat a Playseat!

### **WWW.PLAYSEATSSA.CO.ZA**



WITH THE SPECULATION OVER and the cards available at retail, AMD's 6000 series of graphics controllers has probably been the most misrepresented GPU in years. The so called "leaked specs" changed almost daily and even at the very end, they were inaccurate

Fortunately, the final products are as impressive as anyone could have hoped. Sure enough these are not the new high-end parts from AMD, that honour still belongs to the 5870 and the 5970. However by the time you read this it is likely the 6950, 6970 and possibly the 6990 (dual-GPU) will be available

For now though, we have what we can only term a micro, but elegant, evolution of the Cypress core. Oddly enough, AMD has shrunk the die size of the core from 2.15 billion gates to 1.7 removing some parts that were obviously deemed "unnecessary" and other parts optimized for better performance. All in all, the Barts core is a more efficient design with higher performance per millimetre than Cypress.

The Barts XT, which powers the 6870, is the larger of the two cores and performancewise sits comfortably between the ATI RADEON 5850 and the 5870. In some respects it's better than the 5870 especially where tessellation is concerned. This has been the weak point of the Cyrpess core and it has been further improved with performance that is tangible over the previous core. Best of all, however, the smaller die size means the GPU is even cooler. So not only do you get performance gains, they actually cost you less in power draw and thermal dissipation.

As a direct replacement for the 5770, the 6870 is head and shoulders above in every way, it's a little more expensive than the retail price of the 5770 when it was released, but for this small increase in price you get a massive increase in performance and for the most part features. As far as micro

evolutions of GPUs go, the 6800 series is in a word, "perfect".

Where it isn't so great is in the much spoken about HD3D feature that AMD is presenting with the new cards. It's supposed to be the equivalent to NVIDIA's 3D Vision; however the truth is they are not equals at all. Basically AMD hands you over to a thirdparty software developer (iZ3D) and a thirdparty shutter glass manufacturer, which then you will have to experiment with to figure out what works and what doesn't. Add to the problems is the fact there's a limited number of TVs, projectors and monitors that the system supports (unlike generic 120Hz LCD support from the competition). Should you have all of this there's still no guarantee that the effect will work or if it does, the quality of the experience. So as far as we are concerned it's a feature that doesn't really mean anything other than in theory.

On the up side however, Eyefinity has been given a massive boost, and you can now plug in at least five displays without having to jump through all the hoops you needed to before. (Add HDMI 1.4a to that.) AMD has also introduced a new Morphological AA algorithm that works very well and has a relatively small performance hit when compared to traditional MSAA methods. However, it should be noted that this feature is available on the 5000 range of cards as well, just hidden by default.

It's rather difficult to find anything to fault with the new series of cards, and we can't help but get a little excited about the 6900 series if this is what the 6800 family has brought us thus far. If you are in the market for a graphics card upgrade, this summer is going to be one of the best times to buy a graphics card as the performance is there from both camps. Right now there aren't any special edition cards we are aware of and as such you may as well pick up the ASUS card with voltage tweaking software. NAG

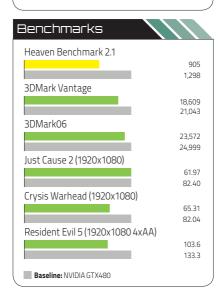
Neo Sibeko

### Specifications |

Core: 915MHz Barts XT (40nm)

Processors: 1120 Render Outputs: 32

**Memory:** 1024MB GDDR5 4.0GHz (128GB/sec) API: DirectX11/OpenGL 4.x /OpenCL 1.X



### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + Easier Eyefintiy setup
- + Great performance
- + Almost as fast as 5870

### >MINUS

 Questionable Stereo3D support

### >Bottom Line

The 6870 may be a mid-range card in pricing but it packs in a lot of high-end performance.



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CUPIO 6140

### **SPECIFICATIONS**

- AMD Athlon II Quad Core cPU
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- Radeon HD5770 Graphics Card
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- Competition closes 31 December 2010.
- Winner will be notified by SMS by 10 January 2011.
- Judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



The future is fusion

### **SAPPHIRE PURE** 1250 PSU

**SAPPHIRE MAY NOT COME** to mind when you think of PSUs, in fact for the most part SAPPHIRE is known predominantly for their graphics cards. This is a shame really because while we are told SAPPHIRE is the largest manufacturer of AMD graphics adapters, they actually do have motherboards and PSUs in their product ranges.

SAPPHIRE is one of the few companies in this industry that have the most stringent quality control requirements. This is not only in their graphics cards (the process by which Vapor-X and TOXIC graphics cards are made and tested is nothing short of awe inspiring) but their PSUs as well. We are not sure if this was contracted out to a third party or built inhouse by SAPPHIRE, either way it makes very little difference because this is arguably a "hyper-end" PSU. 1.25KW may not seem like much, but the sheer build quality and component quality of this unit is nothing short of staggering.

The specs are impressive (six 12V+ rails for a total of 104A) but there are other units which have even better specs. Few however can boast about having a conversion efficiency rate as high as 90%. It is 80+ Bronze certified as well just in case you're not inclined to believe SAPPHIRE's claims. Honestly,



### Specifications

Total Power: 1,200 watts **12V Rails:** 6x (6x30A shared)

Efficiency: 80% +

Features: Quad Crossfire, Quad SLI support, ATX 2.2, EPS 12V 2.92

we did not expect much when presented with this PSU, but it's as impressive in performance as it is in presentation.

While we are not able to test ripple and noise on individual lines, we did record very sturdy voltages across all the rails, be it when loaded or just idling. The only thing we did not like about this PSU is that it's a little louder than it should be. Not enough to deter from the product much, but if there is anything that stops this from being a perfect PSU (ignoring the excessive amounts of 12V rails) it's this slightly elevated noise level. Short of that we can't honestly see how SAPPHIRE could have made a better PSU. Extreme overclockers, power users or gamers looking for a powerful and high quality PSU should definitely take a look at the SAPPHIRE PURE 1250. NAG

Neo Sibeko



### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + Build quality
- + Component quality
- + Power delivery

### >Miniis

- Fan noise is elevated
- Six 12V+ rails are excessive for 104A in total

### >Bottom Line

The first PSU we have ever tested from SAPPHIRE is amongst the best we've ever seen.



RRP > R1,499 SUPPLIER > Rectron WEB > www.gigabyte.com

### **GIGABYTE H55N-USB3**

T'S VERY RARE IF ever we review mini-ITX boards here at NAG, the reason being that they are hardly ever made for regular users, let alone gamers. They are usually for embedded systems and sometimes HTPCs, which is typically of little interest to most of our readers.

With that said, besides the humorous dimensions of the mini-ITX standard, GIGABYTE has packed in some interesting features into a tiny space. Much like all H55 boards, it features a DVI, D-Sub (analogue) and HDMI output with full HDCP support. So that covers all the basics for those who would want to use it in an HTPC. Followed by that is a single gigabit Ethernet port, 7.1 surround capable HD-Audio controller (via an ALC892R chip with digital output), six USB ports and most importantly USB3.0 support over two ports.

There isn't any SATA 6Gbps support, but as we have seen thus far, this interface makes very little difference for SSDs and magnetic drives. So then what you are left with are four SATA 4Gbps ports and a single eSATA

So the H55N-USB3 is pretty much standard affair apart from a USB3.0 (via NEC controller) which we already mentioned. What makes this board intriguing is that it features a full length PCI-Express 2.0 slot which will take just about any graphics card there is on the market. So space permitting you can build a powerful machine just using this tiny motherboard. RAM is limited to two

slots, but what's amazing about this is that the memory overclocking is very good. In fact it's arguably better than that of the bigger high-end boards as we were capable of reaching the same 2,300MHz memory clock that we did on the X58A-UD7 using the same set of memory.

Specifications |

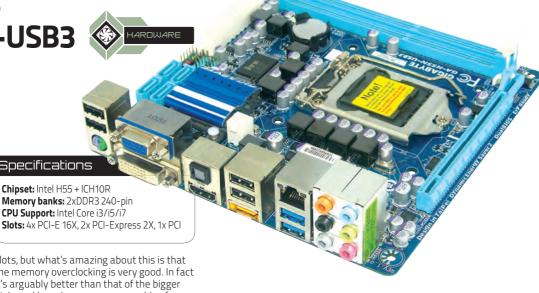
Chipset: Intel H55 + ICH10R

Memory banks: 2xDDR3 240-pin

CPU Support: Intel Core i3/i5/i7

We omitted benchmarks for several reasons (mainly due to the CPU sample we had, unfortunately) but from the results we did gather it's just as capable as any other full-sized ATX board. The BIOS is just as detailed as any of the other GIGABYTE boards and for that it has to be the most impressive mini-ITX board we have ever tested. If a mini-ITX board is what you need, don't look anywhere else but at the H55N-USB3. NAG

Neo Sibeko



### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + USB3.0
- + Great memory overclocking
- + Full speed PCI-Express slot

### >Minus None

>Bottom Line

You won't find a better-featured mini-ITX board anywhere.





### **Corsair HX1000W**

**THE CORSAIR HX1000W HAS** been around for quite a while now, and despite other manufacturers releasing newer 1KW PSUs, the HX1000W remains a firm favourite. So why is this old dog still king? With 1,000 watts of power and 80A on the 12V rails, the HX1000W has more than enough grunt to power pretty much any system out there, but then again most 1KW models do. What separates the HX1000W is the sheer amount of features it has. A modular cabling system that provides enough connectors for anything you could possibly want inside your PC, a high efficiency 80+ rating, amazing build quality, all of these make the HX1000W an exceptional unit, but perhaps the most important feature is one of the most underrated, the five year warranty. Most users don't upgrade their PSU until they need to, and this warranty period gives peace of mind knowing that for the next five years, not only do you have enough power, your PSU will remain alive and well.

Installed in a rig with dual GTX48s, an i7 950 overclocked to 4.5GHZ, six hard drives and a wide array of fans, the HX1000W kept up without breaking a sweat. Measured

### Specifications

warranty

Total Power: 1,000 watt Efficiency: 80% + Features: Multiple GPU ready, ATX 2.2, EPS 12V 2.91, Over Current/ Voltage/Power Protection, Under Voltage Protection and Short Circuit Protection, Five year limited

Hardware \

using a digital multimeter, the 3.3V, 5V and 12V rails were rock solid with little to no fluctuation during system start up, benchmarking, gaming, stress testing and idle. The 3.3V line was the only one which fluctuated more than 0.03V during testing upon start-up, while the other two remained within 0.03V throughout

A modular cable system, 80+ certified, support for TriSLI/ TriCrossfire out of the box, impressive build quality, rock solid power output, a five-year warranty, and a reputation in South Africa as the best PSU manufacturer today, the HX1000W is a great buy and will outlast any other component in your PC. NAG

Derrick Cramer



### Mini Portable Speakers

Ideal for iPod, Music phone, MP3 player, Notebook

### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + 1,000W of power
- + 80+ certified
- + Modular

### >MINUS

A bit pricy

### >Bottom Line

One of the best 1,000W PSUs on the market with enough power and connectors for nearly any system out there.



### **ENJOY MUSIC ANYWHERE**









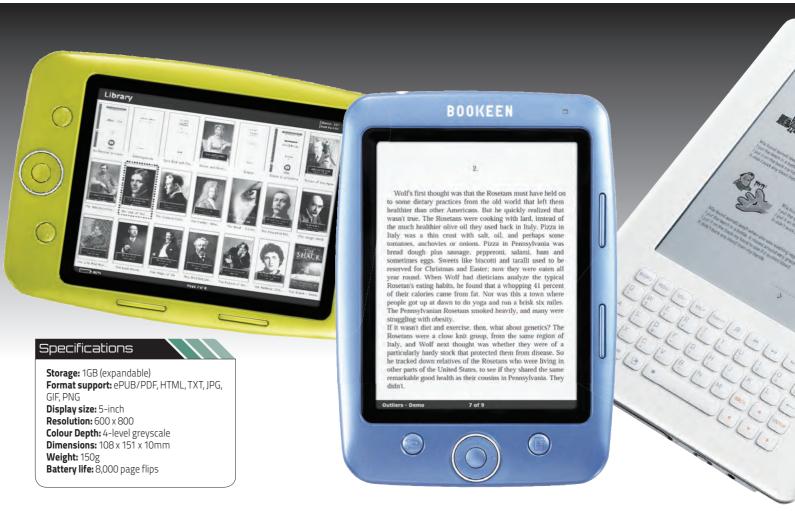




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### **Bookeen Cybook Opus and iRiver Story**

ET'S CLEAR ONE THING up before we ■even get started: I am not a hippie. I like bathing. I don't make my clothes out of hemp or partake in any other sort of silly peacenik nonsense. I do, however, care about the environment and our impact upon it, and while I don't plan on trying to singlehandedly save the world, I do want to do my part to see that it still exists for my kids and grandkids. (After that, they're on their own.)

So, naturally, the idea of electronic distribution of games and books appeals to both my environmental consciousness and my inner geek. I may not be a hippie, but I am unabashedly a gamer, after all. I've already fully embraced Steam as my delivery system of choice for PC games: click, download, play - no more driving to the store, which wastes petrol and time, and no more useless packaging, which kills trees and generally iust creates clutter.

My other great joy in life is reading, but let's face it, books aren't exactly the most environmentally friendly products on Earth. They're not spent nuclear fuel rods or anything quite so nasty, but they are made of paper, and while that stuff does in fact grow on trees, it requires chopping down the tree to get it. So when you consider you can store several thousand books on an eBook reader, the tropical rain forest worth of trees you're saving makes you something of an eco warrior. And if you travel at all, I don't even have to tell you the benefits of having an entire bookshelf in one light-weight device. (Just don't accidentally leave it in the

seatback pocket on the plane.)

So great, you say. They're better for the environment and easier to carry than oldfashioned paper books, but how are they for, ya know, actually reading something. I had a look at two eBook readers this month – the Bookeen Cybook Opus and the iRiver Story and I'm happy to report they're pretty good.

The key to the success of these devices is the simplicity of their E-lnk displays. The clear, crisp grayscale type very closely mimics the pages of a book, and because the screen doesn't refresh at 60Hz like a notebook or iPad they won't cause as much eye strain as their higher-tech counterparts. On the down side, the battery will eventually run out if you're not mindful of it (though the batteries will last several thousand page turns), and I've never had a paper book crash on me before. Also, because most eBooks that you'll buy are DRM protected, you can't loan them

Between these two eReaders which one you should buy depends on what you're looking for from the device. The Bookeen reader is as simple as they come: all it does is display eBooks. Below its 5-inch screen there is a menu button, back button and directional pad for navigation. On the right side of the unit are page forward and backward buttons. The Cybook Opus also has a G-sensor which will rotate the screen depending how you hold it, which is nice if you prefer a landscape page orientation. If you're left-handed, flip the unit 180 degrees so the page buttons are on the left and

the screen will automatically rotate. With 1GB of internal storage, it'll hold roughly 1,000 eBooks at a time, though it also has a micro SD slot if that's not enough capacity for you. By keeping the formula simple, the Cybook Opus succeeds in being an excellent replacement for paper books and is a good choice as an entry-level eReader.

The iRiver Story takes a different approach by doing much more than just displaying words on a screen. In addition to its eReader functionality, the Story also displays popular Office file formats, is an eComic viewer, an MP3 player and voice recorder, and sports a full QWERTY keyboard for use with its diary and notebook functions. That's a lot of bang for your buck considering it only costs R300 more than Opus, but the real trade-offs are battery life (if you use the MP3 player and recorder heavily) and weight. At 284g

### CYBOOK OPUS

### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + Simple
- + Small and light

### >MINUS

 Occasionally freezes up when scrolling long documents

### >Bottom Line

Simple, lightweight and elegant: a perfect introduction to eReaders.





it is a bit hefty. But back to the basics: as an eReader, the iRiver Story is very good. The screen is an inch larger than the Opus' and supports eight levels of grayscale as opposed to four, making it a much better image and comic viewer. It doesn't have a G-sensor, but the display can be rotated 90 degrees by pressing a button. Ergonomically, it's not as simple and elegant as the Opus, but technologically it packs a lot more punch.

Both devices come loaded with a selection of classic novels to get you started, and many free eBooks and other reading material can be found online without too much hassle. If you're looking to purchase a recently released novel, kalahari.net has a good store with a lot of selection. In addition to signing up there, you'll have to register a free Adobe.com account and download their bookshelf software to manage the DRM.

### Specifications

Storage: 2GB (expandable)

**Format support:** ePUB/PDF, TXT, JPG, GIF, PNG, PPT, XLS, DOC, HWP, MP3, WMA, OGG

Display size: 6-inch Resolution: 600 x 800 Colour Depth: 8-level greyscale Dimensions: 127 x 203.5 x 9.4mm

Weight: 284g

Battery life: Reading - 8,000 page flips;

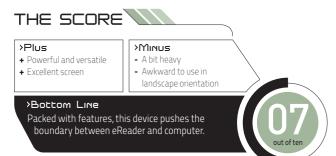
Music – Max. 24 hours; Recording – Max. 5 hours

It's a little bit of a hassle and the only real downside to the whole eBook experience.

At the end of the day, which eReader you choose depends on how many features you want from it. Either way, you should give up your old tree-killing ways and join the electronic revolution. Just remember to shower when you're through.

Chris Bistline

### **IRIVER STORY**













Well put together, a collection of balanced hardware that performs better than expected.

### **Evetech Intel i7 950 Gaming PC**

**ACH TIME I GET** an Evetech system in for review, I know I'm in for something special. The last system I reviewed of theirs was by far the best pre-built system I had ever seen, and was impressive on every front. So will this review system live up to the high standard Evetech have set themselves? Let's find out.

A closer look at the hardware in this build and it becomes apparent that Evetech have done their homework on this build, and it shows. Let's start off with the case, a Silverstone Raven 2. Offering startling good looks that are certain to appeal to the masses, a unique 90 degree twist to the standard motherboard mounting position, good airflow for effective cooling as well as a useful cable management system, the Raven 2 is a good choice to house a high-end system. The i7 950 processor is easy to overclock and represents the best price/ performance processor in the i7 family, another good choice for the high-end user. An ASUS Rampage III Formula motherboard, feature rich and with great overclocking ability, made by one of the best companies in the business, a good base for the rest of the system. GSkill Ripjaw 3 x 2GB 1600MHZ CL8s are another good choice, not only for their performance, but rather because their diminutive height allows the use of this system's trump card, the Noctua D14. Massive is an understatement regarding this cooler, and it is widely accepted as the best air cooler for i7 processors on the market. Dual ASUS GTX480s deal with graphics duties, and work well with the rest of the system, remaining quite cool under load despite their close proximity, a testament not only to the cards, but to the airflow of the Raven 2. With an UltraFast 60GB SSD dealing with the OS, and a Western Digital 1TB black drive handling storage, there is no aspect of this system that will noticeably lag or let the other components down. Cable management once again deserves a special mention as the guys over at Evetech are masters in the art. With no sign of cables in the main compartment, closer inspection reveals just how much effort is put into the cable management. There is no excess cable sticking out, each bundle is neatly folded away and cable tied, and there are no unnecessary extras taking up space. Little things like this are what let you know your rig was built by a professional.

So does the overclocked CPU have much of an effect on the system's performance? The short answer is that after the overclocking Evetech did to this system, the i7 950 runs faster than any standard i7 processor out there, 467 MHz higher than its stock turbo frequency of 3.33GHZ. The long answer isn't so clear. While the increase in CPU speeds is nice, the uncore speed remains at 3200MHZ. Setting this slightly higher at 3600MHZ vielded a noticeable performance increase without compromising stability, and didn't require any voltage adjustment. This is nitpicking however, and the pre overclock had a positive impact on the how well the system scored. Onto the scores, and by any standards they are impressive. 28965 in 3DMark Vantage, 25642 in 3DMark 06 and 879 in Uniengine Heaven benchmark, these are monstrous numbers and real world game play demonstrates this. Everything from Metro 2033 to Crysis Warhead to Battlefield Bad Company 2 ran flawlessly on their highest details settings at a resolution of 1920 x 1200, there is no game this system will struggle with, and it should last for a good few years before needing an upgrade.

So what we have here ladies and gents, is a pre-built, pre overclocked system, comprising of only the best quality components, expertly assembled and setup. The price premium you pay for all of this is minute compared to what you get in return, and I cannot recommend a pre-built system from Evetech enough, they are the best in South Africa bar none and deserve all the praise they get. NAG

**Derrick Cramer** 



### Specifications

**CPU:** Intel i7 950 @ 3.8GHZ

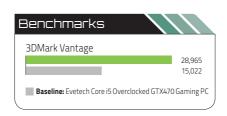
Motherboard: ASUS Rampage III Formula RAM: 3 x 2GB GSkill Ripjaw 1600MHZ

GPU: 2 x ASUS GTX480 Storage HDD: WD Black 1TB OS SSD: 60GB SSD

Chassis: Silverstone Raven II or

Coolermaster HAF X

**PSU:** Coolermaster Real Power Pro 1000W



### THE SCORE

### >Plus

- + High-end hardware
- + Cable management
- + Overclocked

### >MINUS

None

### >Bottom Line

Another amazing effort from Evetech, brilliant in every way bar none.



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### Coming up next

AND ANOTHER YEAR IS fragged in the face. I usually start my December column with an elaborately verbose introduction, comprising all kinds of mawkish metaphors about time, but I wrote the second part first and used up my words. Although, I suppose that dizzy feat of temporal dislocation counts too.\*

99% of PlayStation Move and Xbox Kinect games will suck: It's not because motion control is a bad idea, it's because rubbish shovelware games that rely entirely on cheap gimmicks and stupid people over innovation or anything like real ingenuity are. And the planet is stuffed with stupid people who love cheap gimmicks. Proof? 3D.

**3D also sucks:** Sure, you could take out a second mortgage to finance that 3D-Ready TV and play your games in Amazing! Incredible! Astounding! Three-Dee! OR! You could save your cash and look out of the window instead. And check out those graphics, man, they're totally photorealistic. Reality scores, like, a million or something in Futuremark. 3D gaming is the Nintendo Power Glove of this generation – it looks like the future; it's not, it just looks like it.

Everybody will really look forward to some game, and it will suck too: My money's on Duke Nukem Forever, although perhaps I'll give it some credit for turning up under a category that isn't vapourware. For whatever that's worth. I mean, Daikatana.

The Next Big Thing and more stuff: Brace for impact – the Next Big Thing is almost upon us. It's next, it's big, and it's probably some sort of thing. Following this, industry



analysts use science and Bunsen burners and other incontrovertible proofs to predict we'll be seeing a steady influx of more stuff. And all of this is likely to be eclipsed by a brand new lolcat.

**Controversy, etc.:** PSN's free service no longer includes online multiplayer; Diablo III is delayed to 2012; casual gamers; Bobby Kotick says anything; on-disc "DLC"; console gamers; some socially disenfranchised psychopath who played Bubble Bobble this one time goes on a sniper rampage in the American Midwest, Bubble Bobble blamed; hardcore gamers; more sequels; n00b tubing, camping, and spawn raping on whatever FPS came out that week, and why everybody is pirating it now and waiting on next week's FPS instead (repeat); a game set in Africa is racist because it's set in Africa, and colonialism, the slave trade, and twelfth generation Americans with skin the colour of Nesquik will never forget; Episode 3; PC gamers boycott this, that, or the other thing because it's not exactly, precisely, unconditionally what they wanted, before they even knew they wanted it; PC gaming is dying; PC gaming isn't dying; the end of the world; aliens and/or zombies and/or bionic snakes.

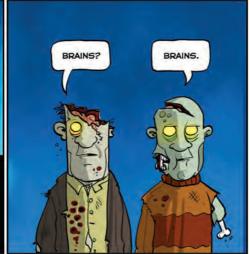
\* In *Terminator 2*, John Connor sends Kyle Reese from the future to 1995, where – during the course of subsequent events – Kyle Reese impregnates John Connor's mom... with John. If Kyle Reese had not travelled back in 1995, and impregnated John Connor's mom with John, John could not have sent Kyle back in time. So, actually, John Connor can't possibly exist. It's kinda like that.

### **FXTRALIFF**















The Fight<sup>™</sup> is set in the gritty, brutal underworld of illegal fighting. Fancy yourself as a bare knuckle boxer or a heavy weight champ? Battle it out with the toughest of underground brawlers, using the move@motion controller to throw punches, bob, weave and stick in some dirty low blows.



The critically acclaimed action adventure has been given a PlayStation®Move makeover, making the hunt for the Origami Killer even more involving than before... Heavy Rain™ Move Edition is an intense psychological thriller which challenges you to track down a serial killer.



Gran Turismo 5 features more than 1000 licensed cars from the world's top manufacturers and more than 20 tracks with more than 70 variations, including famous world circuits, city courses, and other environments. The most realistic simulator, a musthave for any car racing fan!



Join an elite task force on a mission to catch the most feared warlord in South America and use your motion controller to bring down the bad guys. Enjoy intense shootouts with a friend in two player mode. Also included are two complete bonus games - Deadstorm Pirates™ and Time Crisis™ 4 (Arcade Version).







### **GIGABYTE**















ecommended Gaming Motherboard



No.1 Choice for Your Motherboard Needs



we simply haven't seen a motherboard value this good ~ Toms Hardware



If you're building a Core i7 PC, then this board should be top of your shopping list ~ Bit-Tech



this should be a popular board for gamers, multimedia enthusiasts, workstations, and overclockers alike! ~ **Overclockers Club** 



we'd categorize the Gigabyte X58A-UD3R's performance as "excellent." ~ Hot Hardware



I found nothing not to like about the X58A-UD3R. Think Computers



X58A-UD3R can really crank out high frequencies when it wants to ~ Bjorn3D











GA-X58A-UD3R



GA-X58A-UD5



GA-X58A-UD7













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